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Reigning in the Senate



**Senate President
John Cullerton:
A break from the past**



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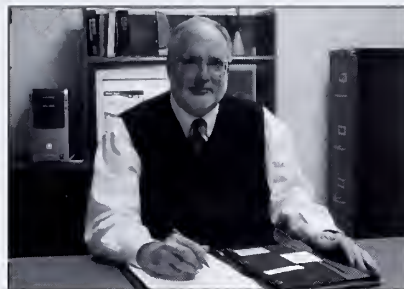
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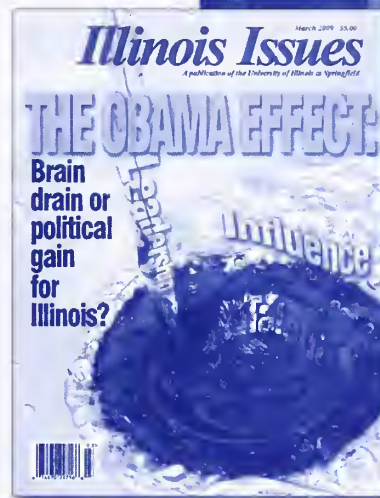
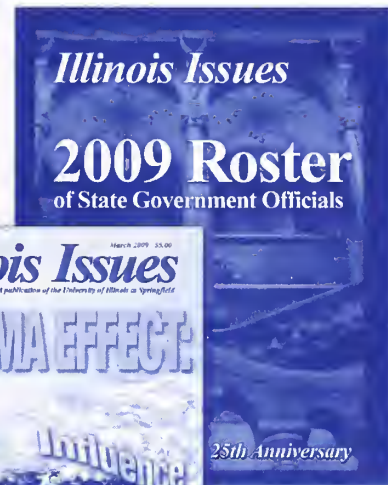
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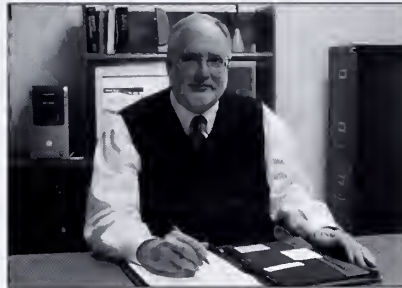
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Dana Heupel



Artwork serves as a reminder of distinguished Illinois politicians

by Dana Heupel

For our wedding anniversary recently, my wife gave me a gift to hang in my office. Created by Springfield artist Jim Edwards, it is an accordion-like combination of two images. Viewed from the left side, you see Abraham Lincoln; from the right, Barack Obama.

The framed artwork is titled *The Boys from Illinois*, and I like it a lot. I don't search for too many deep meanings. Its relevance to me lies simply in the fact that these two Illinoisans are inextricably linked this year, when we observed the 200th birthday of one; the inauguration of the other. And, of course, through Lincoln's role in ending slavery and Obama's election as the nation's first African-American president.

For me, there's also a personal coincidence: I received the gift on March 31; two days later, former Gov. Rod Blagojevich was

indicted by federal prosecutors. Since then, Mr. Edwards' construction has served as a daily reminder that although Illinoisans have much to be ashamed of when it comes to disgraced politicians — with names like Blagojevich and Ryan and Walker and Kerner

and Rostenkowski and Reynolds and Powell and Hodge and many others — we also have elected many officials we can be proud of.

And not just Lincoln and Obama; many others have had notable careers. While it's impossible to understand

why one politician veers away from public service and another stays the course, perhaps we can learn something from statements by those who served honorably, reflecting on how government officials should conduct themselves.

Lincoln once said: "When I do good, I feel good; when I do bad, I feel bad. That's my religion." In a letter to a friend, he wrote: "I believe it is an established maxim in morals that he who makes an assertion without knowing whether it is true or false, is guilty of falsehood; and the accidental truth of the assertion, does not justify or excuse him."



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In imposing new ethics rules earlier this year, Obama told his staff, "Let me say it as simply as I can: Transparency and the rule of law will be the touchstones of this presidency."

Though time will be the ultimate arbiter of how well he holds to those principles, at least our new president started off on the right path.

Many other prominent and well-respected Illinois elected officials also have weighed in on government service. The late U.S. Democratic Sen. Paul Simon, for instance, is widely recognized as a model for ethical conduct.

In a 1998 article for *Christian Ethics Today* on campaign contributions — the lust for which has been the downfall of so many Illinois politicians — Simon wrote, "Over and over on the Senate floor, I see the process that should be serving the public being twisted to serve those who contribute to our campaigns." And in a declaration in a 2002 federal court case where another senator and others sought to declare the McCain-Feingold campaign finance law unconstitutional, Simon opposed the plaintiffs and supported the restrictions by honestly summing up the problem:

"While I realize some argue donors don't buy favors, they buy access," he stated. "That access is the abuse, and it affects all of us. If I got to a Chicago hotel at midnight, when I was in the Senate, and there were 20 phone calls waiting for me, 19 of them names I didn't recognize and the 20th someone I recognized as a \$1,000 donor to my campaign, that is the one person I would call. You feel a sense of gratitude for their support."

Former Gov. Adlai E. Stevenson, twice the Democratic nominee for president, might as well have been referring to Illinois' current sad ethical situation when he said in a 1952 campaign speech in Los Angeles, "Public confidence in the integrity of the government is indispensable to faith in democracy; and when we lose faith in the system, we have lost faith in everything we fight and spend for."

On the Republican side, former Sen. Everett Dirksen is perhaps best-

known for something he probably never said: "A billion here, a billion there, sooner or later it adds up to real money." But that quote, wherever it came from, might apply to Illinois' current fiscal problems, which many believe were caused at least partially by excessive spending. And an actual statement of Dirksen's may well be an antidote to modern-day over-the-top partisanship: "I am a man of fixed and unbending principles, the first of which is to be flexible at all times."

Former U.S. Rep. John Anderson, a Republican from Rockford who ran as an independent for president in 1980, also might as well have been addressing state government's current fiscal dilemma when he remarked about Ronald Reagan's plan to cut taxes, balance the federal budget and increase military spending. "The only way you can do that," Anderson said, "is with mirrors."

Reagan, of course, was a native Illinoian, although his political roots took hold in California. His reported take on corrupt officials: "Politics is supposed to be the second-oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first."

It's probably risky to judge politicians by their words — witness Blagojevich's promises to reform and renew Illinois government after the Ryan scandal. But the point is that despite FBI special agent Robert Grant's statement about Illinois after Blagojevich was arrested — "If it is not the most corrupt state in the United States, it's certainly one hell of a competitor" — we also have a long history of prominent politicians from both political parties whose careers were distinguished, not disgraced. And it's worth remembering that the list of those whose public service was honorable — which also contains names such as Bryan and Douglas and Percy and Michel and many, many others — is actually much longer than the other. □

For more information about *The Boys from Illinois*, contact artist Jim Edwards at jimni63@comcast.net.

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Credits: The issue was designed by Patty Sullivan. The cover photograph was taken by Bethany Jaeger, as Cullerton fondly recalled how he won the Mr. Wonderful crown from the Conference of Women Legislators in 1979.

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Subscription questions: Illinois Issues, Subscription Division, P.O. Box 2795, Springfield, IL 62708-2795 or call 1-800-508-0266. Hours are 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday (except holidays). **Subscriptions:** \$39.95 one year/ \$72 two years/ \$105 three years; student rate is \$20 a year. Individual copy is \$5. Back issue is \$5. Illinois Issues is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin and is available electronically on our home page: <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>. Illinois Issues (ISSN 0738-9663) is published monthly, except July and August are combined. December is published online only. Periodical postage paid at Springfield, IL, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Illinois Issues, Subscription Division, P.O. Box 19243, Springfield, IL 62794-9243.

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Bethany Jaeger



The search for new revenue sources will come to a head this month

by Bethany Jaeger

Democrats and Republicans fully expected to make tough choices this year. As they react to the 17th month of a national recession and a \$12.4 billion deficit projected for next year, Illinois lawmakers are on the hot seat now.

Gov. Pat Quinn proposed his own plan that would trim spending and generate new revenues. Some of his money-making ideas are expected to create tough votes for lawmakers before May 31, the day they're supposed to adjourn the spring legislative session.

The ultimate goal is to plug the deficit in the operating budget and to spur economic activity with construction projects in a capital budget.

Anticipating that some of Quinn's ideas will fail, Democrats are advancing some of their own. Republicans also have offered alternatives. But the bipartisan tone established early this year may not survive the end-of-session votes on whether to increase state taxes.

Republicans want to cut spending, but Democrats say that won't be enough, that the state will need more revenue, too.

Democratic House Speaker Michael Madigan told *Illinois Issues* last month that he doesn't expect "cooperation or support from the Republicans."

Senate President John Cullerton says it is an unusual year when Democrats look to cut the budget and target pensions of teachers and state employees, both of which tend to be their political allies.

The bipartisan tone established early this year may not survive the end-of-session votes on whether to increase state taxes.

"So we're not acting like Democrats normally act, and we'd ask the Republicans to not act like Republicans normally act," Cullerton says. "And at the end of the day, when we still have a deficit after we do all this cutting, we need some help on raising money for a capital bill and to close the deficit."

Republicans, however, firmly oppose an income tax increase, especially during a recession. They're also wary of such revenue proposals as increasing the state's sales tax on cigarettes, extending the sales tax to some coffee and hygiene products and ending some corporate tax breaks.

In turn, the Senate GOP highlighted ways in which the state could reduce its costs of Medicaid programs, which consume most of the state's revenue each year. One idea was to partner with the private sector, letting the new partners decide who would be eligible for public benefits.

Senate Minority Leader Christine Radogno says people are angry and feel that government does nothing but take money from them. "And in Illinois, it's been demonstrated that we have a pretty corrupt system, so I think people are in no mood to spend more money."

House Republican Leader Tom Cross joined Radogno in March to support the idea of expanding gaming to finance a capital construction program for roads, bridges, transit and schools.

Cullerton, on the other hand, says he would not finance a construction program with gambling revenues, although he would consider gaming as a way to lessen the need to raise the income tax.

Ultimately, neither party is willing to go far enough to whip the state's budget into shape within a couple of years.

Kent Redfield, a political scientist at the University of Illinois at Springfield, says if the state were to significantly cut spending, it would have to go after the two largest expenditures: education and health care. On the other side of the equation, if the state were to generate significantly more revenue, then it would have to go after hefty income and sales taxes.

The other revenue ideas are ancillary, he says, and wouldn't add up to major money-makers.

"Ultimately, what's going to get to the governor's desk are going to be what John Cullerton and Mike Madigan want to get to the governor's desk," Redfield

says. "I think it's a diversion at this point to be playing at the margins."

Democrats could save the largest vote — to increase the income tax — as leverage for gaining Republican support for a construction program.

In the meantime, they're likely to debate at least some of the following revenue proposals.

Operating budget

Income tax The highest profile vote will be whether to increase the state income tax. Quinn proposed increasing the rate for individuals from 3 percent to 4.5 percent. The rate applied to businesses would increase from 4.8 percent to 7.2 percent.

But Quinn wants to use some of the new revenue to help shield low-income families from the increase, so he proposes tripling the personal exemption from \$2,000 to \$6,000. If enacted, the state would net an estimated \$3 billion a year.

Without GOP support, Democrats may seek a lower rate increase and scale back Quinn's personal exemption. One example is **Senate Bill 2036**, which would increase the rate by 0.375 of a percentage point and generate about \$1 billion. The new money currently would be designated to a construction program.

Cigarette tax The Senate already approved **SB 44**, which would increase the state sales tax on cigarettes by 50 cents a pack this September and another 50 cents a year later. It also would reclassify small cigars as cigarettes, generating an estimated total of \$350 million for the next two fiscal years. Most of the revenue would be designated for paying health care providers who participate in public aid programs.

Six Democrats, however, voted against the measure. A seventh, Sen. Emil Jones III, didn't vote at all. So the measure eked by with the 30 votes it needed to pass, a sign of how future tax-related votes could pan out.

"This was the first bill that required people to actually vote for a tax," Cullerton said last month. "And you can see it's not easy for people to do that. Unfortunately, we're probably going to have to do a lot more."

The House has two versions, **HB 454** and **HB 1196** that have not advanced.

Democrats could save the largest vote — to increase the income tax — as leverage for gaining Republican support for a construction program.

End retailers occupation tax Quinn's budget proposes ending a tax incentive for retailers. They no longer would be able to keep a portion of the sales tax that they currently get for collecting the tax on behalf of the state. The new revenue would help pay for a 10-day "back-to-school sales tax holiday" for shoes, clothes and school supplies each August.

The legislature has four versions of bills to end the tax incentive, none of which have advanced very far. They include **SB 9**, **SB 19**, **SB 45** and **HB 328**.

Expanded sales tax Quinn proposes reclassifying sweetened teas, coffee drinks and some hygiene products. The change would increase the sales tax from the food and drug rate of 1 percent to the general merchandise rate of 6.25 percent. It would generate \$14 million.

End other corporate tax breaks Quinn also wants to generate about \$287 million, including money from changing the sales tax on tea, coffee and hygiene products, by repealing an unutilized tax credit for research and development, taxing prewritten "canned" software and ending the manufacturer's purchase credit.

Internet Lottery Senate Democrats have advanced **SB 1654**, which would create a pilot program to sell tickets for the Lotto and Mega Million games online. It also would allow the state to hire a private firm to manage the asset. Sen. Don Harmon, the sponsor from Oak Park, says the idea would be to "contract with someone smarter than us to operate it."

Short the pension payments Although one of Quinn's proposals doesn't count as new revenue, his idea to reduce the state's contribution into its five public employee pension systems would free up some cash for other purposes. Quinn proposes skipping out on about \$500 million this fiscal

year and \$2.3 billion next fiscal year.

Teachers' unions and state employees strongly oppose the idea.

Federal stimulus Education groups also dislike the idea of diverting some federal stimulus funds that are earmarked for public education to pay for general state operations, but the plan already is in motion, with the expectation that the state could reinvest more money into education as the economy recovers.

Capital budget

Driving-related fees Quinn would increase various fees, including those for vehicle registrations and driver's licenses. He also would use money from the dedicated Road Fund to sell bonds for road, bridge and mass transit projects.

The national recession has affected vehicle registrations in Illinois. According to the legislative Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability's April revenue update, new car and truck registrations dropped to "levels not seen in decades" in March. "Moreover, there are no signs of any near-term change in direction."

Suag the local share of income tax Quinn also would siphon off a portion of the new income tax revenue that normally would go to local governments to help finance school construction projects.

Local governments are angry that they wouldn't get their traditional 10 percent.

Motor fuel tax increase Quinn opposes an increase in the motor fuel tax to fund construction projects. The tax has been 19 cents a gallon since 1991. But Democrats already are considering **HB 1**, which would increase the tax by 8 cents a gallon.

Sen. Martin Sandoval, however, says it wouldn't generate enough money to meet the needs of mass transit systems, particularly in the Chicago area.

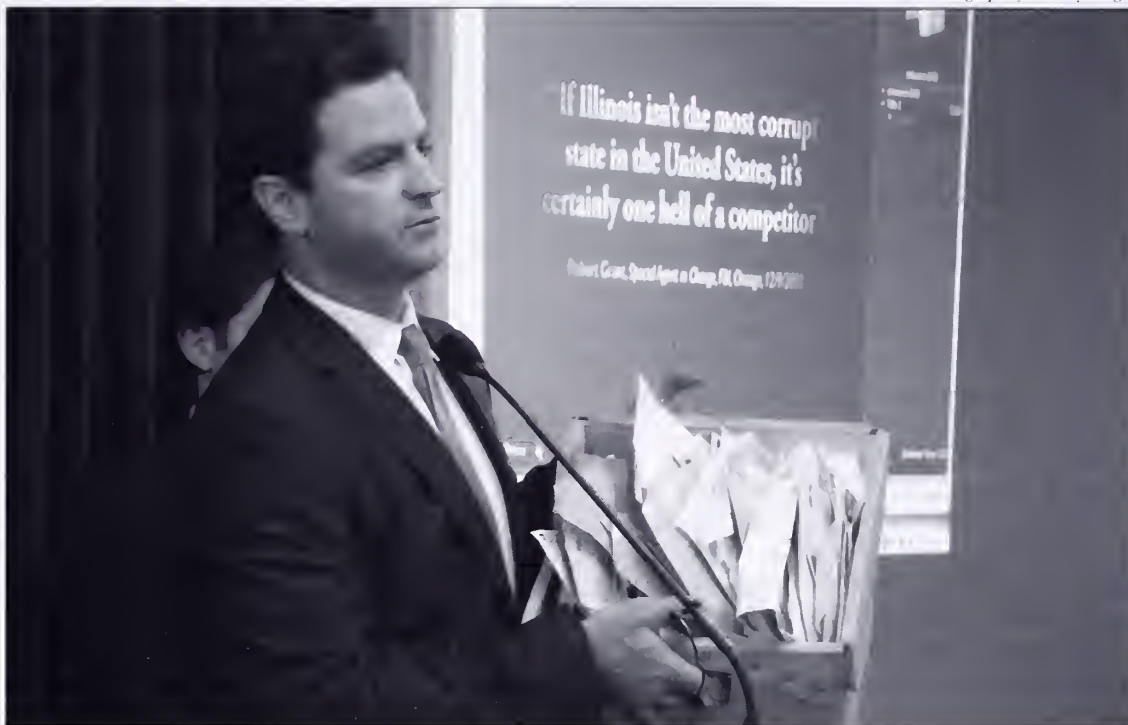
Video gaming House Democrats also have advanced **HB 4239**, which would legalize video poker machines and tax them, potentially generating up to \$500 million a year, according to Rep. Frank Mautino, the Democratic sponsor. He would dedicate the revenue to school construction projects, starting with a list of 23 schools that have been waiting for money the state promised them in 2002. □

Bethany Jaeger can be reached at capitolbureau@aol.com.

BRIEFLY

Prosecutors target 'Blagojevich Enterprise'

Photograph by Bethany Jaeger



Former assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick Collins displays the amount of mail he's received from Illinois citizens seeking state government reforms. Behind him is a quote from Chicago FBI Agent Robert Grant the day the feds arrested former Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Editor's note: See Illinois Issues online for a chronological list of resources and continuing updates on former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, from his arrest to his ongoing criminal case, at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>.

Former Gov. Rod Blagojevich's federal indictment came on the same day that the Illinois General Assembly approved a major revamp of the public employee pension systems, just one of the state government operations that prosecutors allege was corrupted by Blagojevich's inner circle.

A product of the ongoing *Operation Board Games* probe, the 75-page criminal indictment of Blagojevich and five others — including his brother but not his wife — alleges that he and his advisers started conspiring to personally gain from the governor's office before Blagojevich was sworn in on January 13, 2003.

U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald is targeting the "Blagojevich Enterprise," which includes the former governor's office and his campaign fund, Friends of Blagojevich.

Prosecutors will try to prove that the governor violated federal law by defrauding the public, using the telephone or mail, thereby depriving the people of Illinois of honest services, says Andrew Leipold, a law professor with the University of Illinois' Institute of Government and Public Affairs. The inner circle allegedly conducted a pattern of dishonest behavior designed to enrich each member, violating the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

Blagojevich pleaded not guilty last month.

According to the indictment, Blagojevich and his inner circle schemed to use the governor's office for financial gain

that would be split among them once Blagojevich left office. He allegedly let two informal advisers control state government operations.

They, in turn, allegedly generated millions of dollars for Blagojevich's campaign fund and "provided financial benefits directly to Blagojevich and his family." One alleged scheme included a real estate business that paid Blagojevich's wife, Patricia, \$12,000 a month and an additional \$40,000 in commissions, "even though she had done little or no work," according to the indictment.

While the indictment rehashes schemes to shake down companies that sought to do business with the state Teachers' Retirement System, which already sent members of Blagojevich's inner circle to jail, the indictment also reveals new details, including an alleged scheme between Blagojevich and his informal advisers to personally profit

through a \$10 billion pension bonding scheme in 2003.

The trial might take months or even years to convene, and U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin says he hopes Blagojevich lays low until then.

"We can only hope the former governor will not view this indictment as a green light for another publicity tour. Rod Blagojevich deserves his day in court, but the people of Illinois deserve a break."

Blagojevich conducted multiple media tours after the FBI arrested him in late 2008, when officials alleged that he attempted to personally and politically profit from his power to appoint a U.S. senator to replace President Barack Obama. The arrest triggered an impeachment investigation by the Illinois House and led to Blagojevich's conviction and removal from office by the state Senate. Gov. Pat Quinn was sworn in January 29.

Bethany Jaeger

By the numbers

The charges are part of *Operation Board Games*, which began in 2003 and has involved 17 total defendants. The indictment includes:

- 19 total counts of corruption for six people.
- 16 counts of federal corruption solely against Blagojevich.
- 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, the maximum penalty for each charge, including racketeering conspiracy, wire fraud, extortion conspiracy and attempted extortion.
- 5 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, the maximum penalty for the charge that Blagojevich lied to the FBI.

The inner circle

- **Rob Blagojevich** of Nashville, Tenn., the former governor's brother, chaired his campaign fund since August 2008.
- **John Harris** of Chicago, Blagojevich's chief of staff from late 2005 to last December, when he was arrested with Blagojevich.
- **Alonzo "Lon" Monk** of Park Ridge, a lobbyist and longtime Blagojevich insider and campaign manager, as well as Blagojevich's first chief of staff in 2003.
- **Christopher Kelly** of Burr Ridge, a Blagojevich fundraiser and previous chair of Blagojevich's campaign fund. He was charged with tax fraud in December 2007.
- **William "Bill" Cellini** of Springfield, Illinois Asphalt Pavement Association executive director, who raised money for Blagojevich and allegedly influenced officials of the Teachers' Retirement System. He was indicted in October 2008. This replaces that indictment.

Pension revamp starts series of ethics reforms

Within two hours after federal prosecutors filed their indictment against former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, the Illinois General Assembly approved a measure that would replace every board member serving on a state public employee pension board.

Blagojevich's indictment alleges he conspired with five others to, among other things, rig the Teachers' Retirement System board to receive illegal kickbacks and to pressure investment firms seeking business with the state to contribute to Blagojevich's political fund. The retirement system serves more than 355,500 teachers and administrators outside Chicago.

Gov. Pat Quinn signed **SB 364** into law one day after Blagojevich's indictment. The law allows Quinn to appoint new pension board members by this month.

It also specifically fired Jon Bauman, executive director of the Teachers' Retirement System, who served during the years that a Blagojevich appointee, Stuart Levine, rigged the board. Levine was convicted of a felony and is serving prison time.

Bauman resigned less than a week

after Quinn signed reforms into law. The Teachers' Retirement System defended Bauman's service and said in a statement that the measure unfairly punishes a man who hasn't been accused of committing a crime. The statement also said the governor's ability to appoint more members has potential to increase, not decrease, the opportunity for political influence.

The measure passed the General Assembly with near-unanimous support. It includes new mandates designed to prevent conflicts of interest and to require all board members to conform to state ethics laws. Consultants also will have a fiduciary responsibility to manage funds in an ethical manner, as well as to register with the federal government.

The new law also is designed to help create more opportunities for investment firms owned by women and minorities.

The pension package is the first product of a special joint legislative committee studying government reforms, chaired by House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton. They said last month that the

committee would produce more reforms before the end of May.

Meanwhile, Quinn's Illinois Reform Commission released its first set of recommendations early last month. They include capping the amount individuals, businesses and political organizations could donate to campaigns, as well as making state procurement laws more transparent and shielded from political influence.

More reforms to the oversight of public pensions could be considered this month. The legislative Commission on Government Forecasting and Accountability will release a report about the merit of consolidating the pension funds.

State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulas proposed the idea as a way to save money and to address ethical violations exposed during the Blagojevich investigation. He wants to merge three boards that oversee investments of public pension systems for teachers, lawmakers, judges, state workers and university employees, replacing them with a single new fund called the Illinois Public Employees' Retirement System.

Bethany Jaeger

LEGISLATIVE CHECKLIST

The 96th General Assembly is scheduled to adjourn its spring session on May 31, the constitutional deadline. The end-of-session rush is expected to include votes on whether Illinois will raise its income tax rate, increase its sales tax on motor fuel and hike other driving-related fees, all in an effort to restore the state's operating budget and spur the economy with a major road and school construction program. In the meantime, here are some measures advancing through the chambers.

Video gaming

HB 4239 Rep. Frank Mautino, a Spring Valley Democrat, would legalize and tax payouts for winning games on video machines in taverns, veterans' halls, restaurants and truck stops. While the machines currently are legal in places that serve alcohol, it is illegal for the establishments to pay winnings. Mautino estimates that the new tax could generate an annual \$300 million to \$400 million in revenue, which he would dedicate to school construction projects.

GOP leadership

SB 600 The Illinois Republican Party would have to change the way it elects its State Central Committee members, which currently are internally elected. Under a measure approved by the Senate, the GOP would have to return to a former process that allows the public to elect party leaders during primary elections. Illinois Republicans are split on the concept.

HB 825 Similar language is in a Republican-sponsored bill in the House; however, Democrats attached it to a GOP-sponsored measure that seeks "open primaries," so voters would not have to declare a political party when voting on primary election ballots.

Mandatory overtime

SB 1369 State employees at mental health hospitals, developmental centers, substance abuse treatment centers and other human service facilities, as well as veterans' homes, prisons and other cor-

rectional centers, could no longer be forced to work overtime hours, under a measure approved by the Senate. Sen. Michael Frerichs, a Champaign Democrat, says years of staff cuts have led state facilities to require overtime to fill vacancies, which he says endangers employees and clients and costs as much as \$60 million in extra pay. Times of emergencies and natural disasters would be exempt. Republican opponents say the state should respect collective bargaining processes with unions.

Cigarette tax

SB 44 Smokers in Illinois would have to pay more for cigarettes under a bill that advanced to the House. The proposal by Sen. Jeffrey Schoenberg, an Evanston Democrat, would raise the state sales tax on cigarettes by \$1 a pack. The increase would be phased in over two years, and the revenue would help pay down the state's Medicaid bills.

Truck speed limit

SB 1467 The Senate approved a measure that would allow semitrailers to drive 65 miles per hour on rural interstates, matching the speed limit for passenger vehicles. Former Gov. Rod Blagojevich vetoed the measure three times in the past.

Driving safety

The Senate approved two measures aimed at preventing drivers from being distracted by cell phones.

HB 71 Drivers would be banned from sending or reading text messages.

HB 72 Drivers would be banned from using cell phones while driving on school grounds or through construction zones.

Athlete drug testing

HB 272 Student athletes would be randomly tested for performance enhancing drugs throughout the sports seasons, under a measure that passed the House. The Illinois Department of Public Health would regulate the testing program, which would last until 2011.

Prompt payment

HB 1034 State government would be required to pay its bills within 30 days or face an interest charge of 1 percent, under a measure approved by the House. Proposed by Rep. Bob Flidcr, a Mount Zion Democrat, the charge would increase up to 1.5 percent after 60 days of nonpayment. Future state budget proposals also would have to include the amounts and descriptions of overdue bills.

Public access

HB 35 Anyone with Internet access would be able to search an online database that includes information about state employees, state expenditures, business licensing and tax credits for businesses, under a measure that passed the House. Rep. Michael Tryon, a Crystal Lake Republican, sponsored the measure.

Free speech

Two bills designed to protect the free speech of university and community college faculty and staff advanced to the Senate. Both were proposed by Rep. Naomi Jakobsson, an Urbana Democrat.

HB 898 Faculty and staff members would be able to talk to elected officials about any topic, as long as they clearly weren't representing the school.

HB 899 Faculty and staff could wear political buttons, T-shirts and other campaign material in class only if they pertained to the topic of discussion. Posting political stickers on their vehicles and attending political rallies when they were not working would be protected rights.

Dog fighting

HB 69 Dog owners, trainers, gamblers and audience members of dog fighting activities would receive stiff penalties if caught, under a bill sponsored by Rep. Marlow Colvin, a Chicago Democrat. Individuals would be prohibited from owning, breeding, training and leasing dogs for the purpose of using them for dog fights. Equipment, including the vehicles used to transport the animals, and training materials would be confiscated and used as evidence. The House advanced the bill to the Senate.



Campaign calls

HB 268 Individuals or groups that pay for automated telephone calls that name a candidate or try to sway opinion on public policy issues would have to identify themselves, under a bill that passed the House. Violators would face a Class A misdemeanor, according to the proposal by Rep. Bill Mitchell, a Forsyth Republican.



Ethics

SB 54 The Executive Ethics Committee would be able to release reports of employee ethics violations, under a bill that advanced to the House. If a report calls for disciplinary action, the ethics committee would release a redacted version to the public. The measure, proposed by Democratic Sen. Susan Garrett of Lake Forest, would allow an employee to make a case against a report's release.



Condoms for cons

HB 419 The House defeated a bill that would have allowed prisoners in the Illinois corrections system to buy condoms. The measure, sponsored by Chicago Democratic Rep. Monique Davis, received only 11 votes in favor and 86 votes in opposition.

Jamey Dunn, Bethany Jaeger, Hilary Russell

Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Park District



Parks allow young gardeners to grow

The Chicago Park District is kicking off May with Harvest Garden, a three-season program that allows children 8 to 12 years old to get their hands dirty as they learn how to cultivate and maintain an organic garden. They also learn how to harvest and use the produce the garden yields and how to “put the garden to bed” for the winter. Spanning several Chicago neighborhood parks, the program helps to create a sense of community in addition to beautifying the open space.

“The kids plant primarily vegetables, but also herbs and edible flowers,” says Jane Schenck, program specialist for Harvest Garden.

In its 10th year, the program keeps growing in popularity, and in the number of participants. “The program originally started in seven parks, and now it has expanded to 16,” Schenck says. Each park will accommodate up to 20 gardeners. The spring and fall sessions usually draw 12 children per park on average, while the summer session brings in closer to 20, she says.

Harvest Garden’s afterschool spring session runs May 4-June 5 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The park district provides gardening tools and offers instruction, with help from neighborhood volunteers. Along with gardening, participants will also be able to take part in related activities, including crafts, music, cooking and lessons pertaining to nutrition and healthy eating.

Harvest Garden exposes children to new foods and ideas.

“Trying something new” is one of the ideas Harvest Garden enforces, Schenck says. “Especially with the vegetables — some of them I don’t think they would ever try otherwise.”

Registration for the spring session of Harvest Garden is open to the public and continues until filled. A day camp summer session runs from June 22-August 14, and a fall afterschool session begins September 14. For more information, visit www.chicagoparkdistrict.com.

Nicole Harbour



Oldest Carnegie library in Illinois subject of suit

Freeport is home to the oldest surviving Carnegie library in Illinois. Sitting empty for five years, the building is currently at the center of a legal struggle over its ownership.

Steel tycoon Andrew Carnegie provided the city with a \$30,000 grant to build the structure, which was completed in September 1902. The library, designed by the famous Chicago architectural firm Patton and Miller, served the city for 100 years until 2003, when it was replaced by a new facility. The new Freeport Public Library, which sits less than half a mile from its predecessor, was built to comply with Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, says Mayor George Gaulrapp.

Freeport contends that a deed signed in 1920 by Winnifred Taylor, a Freeport socialite who founded the library, conveyed it to the city. But Freeport resident John Cook argues that the building belongs to the Library Board of Trustees, not the city. Cook believes the deed is irrelevant because Taylor was not a member of the library board, nor could she, as an individual, convey ownership of the library to anyone.

Freeport Public Library Director Carole Dickerson declined to comment, citing ongoing litigation.

"This library should be kept in the people's hands, not the city's," Cook says.

The city would like to restore the exterior and market the inside for some other use, Gaulrapp says. Some residents have expressed interest in renting the building to serve as law offices or possibly use it for condominiums, he says.

A bench trial in Stephenson County court is scheduled for May 18.

Melissa Weissert

Supermax prison standards spark debate

Correction advocates call it self-imposed punishment. Inmate advocates call it inhumane.

Tamms Correctional Center, a maximum-security prison in southern Illinois, is the focus of a House bill calling for reform of the institution's policies. Tamms is also known as a closed maximum-security facility, or a supermax prison.

Tamms Year Ten, a group of volunteers calling for change in the prison, describes the confinement system as inhumane. Members say that although inmates are told when they are sent to Tamms that they will be there for a year, as originally intended by design, more than 80 inmates have been there for 10 years.

The Illinois Department of Corrections, however, maintains that current maximum-security prison procedures are a vital part of its operation.

Rep. Julie Hamos, an Evanston Democrat, is sponsoring **HB 2633**, which would establish updated criteria under which a prisoner would transfer to a maximum-security prison. These would include attempted or committed acts of violence that result in serious injury or death, gang activity, repeated escape attempts or disruptive behavior that interferes with normal prison operations.

The bill also stipulates that inmates classified as seriously mentally ill should not be sent to a maximum-security prison. Inmates at that prison also would receive an individual review within 90 days of the bill becoming law to assess their status for continued incarceration there.

"This is worse than Guantanamo Bay," Hamos says. "We don't treat prisoners in Illinois like this, and it violates the Geneva Convention agreements. What this bill does is recognize that we may still need Tamms as a safety belt for the rest of the prison system, but there ought to be some policies to guide the Department of Corrections in terms of this [facility]."

Rep. Jim Sacia, a Pecatonica Republican, says he opposes Hamos' bill because the facility contributes to the safety of Illinois residents. Sacia has a 30-year career in law enforcement, serving 28 years as an FBI agent. He says he sees gang activity as one of the state's biggest problems.

"IDOC desperately needs a control factor for its 45,000-plus prisoners," he says. "Tamms has become that tool. I think they need the flexibility and the latitude to control the gang activity in our prisons. The prison system in Illinois is far, far, far safer today because of Tamms."

At Tamms, inmates spend 23 hours each day in their cells and one hour of recreation time — alone — in another guarded enclosure. Prisoners are permitted to shower daily but are restrained and escorted each time they leave their cells.

The major complaints among Tamms Year Ten members is that prisoner isolation at the maximum-security prison deprives inmates of their due process. They say inmates are denied hearings about their transfer to the maximum-security prison, and they're not told how long they will be there.

"Right now, the Illinois Department of Corrections says everyone is in Tamms for some reason, but no one knows what all those reasons are," says Nadya Pittendrigh, a Tamms Year Ten volunteer. "The bottom line is, anyone can be sent there for any reason. The prisoners get due process when sentenced for their crime or get sent to segregation, but they do not get due process when they are sent to Tamms."

Derek Schnapp, spokesman for the state corrections department, says supermax prison protocol is not only necessary, but it's also instrumental to maintaining order within the prison.

"The inmate population at Tamms has earned their way there," Schnapp says. "There have been numerous assaults on staff, not to mention organized disruption and threats on staff. ... There is no inmate that is sent directly to Tamms from court. They were sent to a general population prison and were not able to conform to the requirements of the prison, so they earned their way to Tamms."

The restrictions at Tamms and its reputation among inmates at other prisons has greatly reduced the number of assaults on staff in minimum- and maximum-security prisons, according to Schnapp.

Of the 396,000 inmates who have gone through the Illinois prison system in the 11 years since Tamms opened, 539 have spent time at the maximum security facility.

Hilary Russell

Rubber hits the road

State and local roads, bridges and transit systems throughout Illinois will receive much-needed repairs this construction season, as the General Assembly enacted a \$3.3 billion capital program with near-unanimous support.

The program will issue about \$2 billion in bonds for existing roads and bridges and about \$1 billion for mass transit systems during the next five years. Funding relies on existing dollars in the state's dedicated Road Fund and the transfer of operating dollars to finance the bonds, which will only pay for maintenance and resurfacing projects, not new roads.

"Right now, the conditions of our roads as rated by the engineers is about 76 percent, which most people would say is not good," says Gary Hannig, secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation and former Democratic member of the House. "Within the next five years, we want to take the conditions of the roads ... and bring them up to 90 percent."

The plan only won Republican support after Gov. Pat Quinn's office facilitated negotiations between Democrats and Republicans and made a list of trans-

portation projects available prior to the final vote.

"We weren't for it early in the day because we weren't sure how the money was going to be spent," said House Minority Leader Tom Cross. "I applaud the governor for one, wanting to do capital, and two, making it happen."

A lack of trust concerning how former Gov. Rod Blagojevich would distribute the money stymied attempts to approve major capital construction programs during the past few years.

Republicans also signed on this time because the plan would distribute money according to an existing five-year transportation plan, not based on political preferences.

Senate President John Cullerton said during negotiations last month: "We let the engineers decide, not the politicians. It has nothing to do with Blagojevich or past scores to settle. We're just trying to do it on the square."

The capital plan is framed as a jump start to a much larger, \$26 billion proposal that also would fund construction projects for schools and other major infra-

structure needs. The financing of that program, however, could depend on tax and fee increases, which face a political challenge in acquiring the necessary votes by May 31, the legislature's scheduled adjournment date.

The so-called mini-capital plan was approved last month as part of a \$9 billion spending plan that triggered the flow of \$6.7 billion federal stimulus funds. Some of the money will funnel \$1.7 billion to pay down the state's Medicaid bills. About \$500 million will go to high-speed rail, \$300 million will be spent on a Chicago-area project to reduce freight and vehicular traffic congestion, and \$285 million will go for Amtrak improvements.

Other stimulus funds are earmarked for low-income housing, developmental disability and mental health services, programs for women and children, youth services, criminal justice and domestic violence grants, weatherization jobs and training, environmental protection, water treatment and education (see *Illinois Issues*, April, page 16).

Bethany Jaeger

Olympic bid highlights state and local needs

Chicago is one step closer to securing the 2016 Olympic Summer Games, thanks to a law enacted by Gov. Pat Quinn last month. While many view the Games as a possible boon for the city and the state, others see them as an opportunity to highlight their agendas. Others, meanwhile, completely oppose the city's bid.

The most important aspect of the new law is a \$250 million financial guarantee that would be used to cover debt if the Games' budget went into the red, says Sen. Kwame Raoul, the Chicago Democrat who sponsored the measure.

Raoul says roughly \$700 million from the city and private investors would be used before the state guarantee would have to be tapped. He adds that the Games rarely lose money and that he feels confident the state funds would not be used. If any of the money were needed, the legislation calls for an equal amount to be spent on downstate roads.

In addition to the guarantee, Raoul says improvements that could come with a statewide capital plan for construction projects, including road repairs and mass transit upgrades, would help Chicago host such a large event.

The new law also creates a diversity program with the goals of awarding 25 percent of the potential contracts associated with the Games to minority-owned businesses and 5 percent to companies owned by women.

Some groups say that Chicago needs to address such issues as crime and poverty before focusing on an Olympic bid.

A newsletter posted on the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police Web site expresses concern about the safety of hosting the Games because of recent gun violence in the city. The police also picketed over contract negotiations in April, when members of the International Olympic Committee arrived to tour Chicago.

However, Mark Donahue, president of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police, says the timing of the protest was not connected to the committee's arrival and that his organization is focused on current safety issues in the city.

No Games Chicago, on the other hand, is wholly opposed to Chicago as host. After protesting the Olympic committee's arrival, representatives from the group made their case to the committee on the last day of their tour. Tom Tresser, a spokesman for the group, says money that would be spent on the event should go to long-neglected projects, including affordable housing, school construction and mass transit access in underserved areas. "We need to fix our own house before we think about these grand parties," Tresser says.

Although Raoul says those issues have merit, he adds that community advocates should continue negotiating with the city. "I think it's not productive for any party to try to deter the International Olympic Committee from awarding the bid to Chicago because if you don't win the bid, then you can't leverage it to have the housing. So let's secure the bid first, and let's continue having dialogue," he says.

Jamey Dunn

State fairgrounds hosting gardeners

This year, people visiting the Illinois State Fair will see something new: vegetable gardens. The Illinois Department of Agriculture is using part of the infield circled by the racetrack as community gardens. Agency officials expect about 100 gardeners to pay the \$10 fee for a 12-foot by 12-foot plot, with a limit of two plots. More than 70 experienced and first-time gardeners had signed up by mid-April.

"I had seen some community gardens in urban areas and thought, 'We have a lot of free green space out here, why not give it a try?'" says Tom Jennings, director of the ag department. He says the garden complements some of the recommendations of the Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, such as using seed samples collected for department testing in the seed bank.

"We were throwing that away. So we're going to have free ground, free seed, free water, free sunshine — well, ground costs \$10," says Jennings.

"I just wanted to get outdoors, work outside during the summer," says University of Illinois at Springfield student Danny Rosenkranz. "And I love tomatoes." The Atlanta, Ga., native has volunteered with gardening projects in England and Costa Rica but has never had his own garden. An environmental studies graduate

student, Rosenkranz says he will have the help of a couple of friends to tend his plot of organic tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, peas, squash and strawberries.

Jennings also wants to reach out to younger students. "We have five schools within a mile of the fairgrounds. What we're trying to do is complement the community garden with an educational outreach to students so they can get some gardening skills."

Kristi Kenney, who is guiding the new program for the agriculture department, says the plots are divided between organic and nonorganic uses. The only limitations for gardeners are that herbicides can only be applied by department certified sprayers and plants cannot be too high for the race horses on the track to see over.

University of Illinois Extension specialists will offer advice to gardeners on growing vegetables throughout the season. Jennifer Fishburn, a horticulture educator with the Sangamon/Menard Unit of the Extension, says it's difficult in the first year to put a dollar savings to a garden plot. "The real benefit in growing and raising your own vegetables is that they have higher nutrient value, and the growers know what products have been applied," she says. Along with that comes the exercise, relaxation and enjoyment that tending a garden provides.

In addition, some gardeners are donating a share of their bounty to the Plant a Row for the Hungry project, which supports local food banks and soup kitchens. Sponsored by the Garden Writers Association, the national program has helped coordinate the delivery of more than 14 million pounds of produce, providing more than 50 million meals, from gardeners to the hungry. Before the economic downturn, the U.S. Department of Agriculture had estimated that about 33 million people, 13 million of them children, have substandard diets because they cannot always afford the food they need.

The central Illinois Plant a Row for the Hungry chapter, a group of about 30 home gardeners, last year provided the Central Illinois Food Bank with more than 60,000 pounds of produce that was donated by area gardeners, collected from farmers' markets or gleaned from growers, says Barbara Rogers, master gardener and co-chairwoman of the local chapter. "We do what we can to keep produce from going to waste."

The master gardeners will have an identification plot in the community garden and will be available to advise people who might need some help. "The community garden," she says, "appears to be a very well-planned effort."

Beverley Scobell

Survey says state does inform residents about contracts

In a recent survey, Illinois is among seven states rated in the "best practices" category for providing information on state contracts to the public. The survey by Ralph Nader's Center for the Study of Responsive Law, based in Washington, D.C., concluded that "the Illinois Department of Central Management Services provides a good example of the amount of information that state governments should provide to the citizenry."

The agency puts a summary of the spending and a copy of the contract on the Internet. Included in the information available are the recipient's name and location, the amount and type of transaction, the funding agency, award title, period of the contract, place of performance, program source and the competitive means to obtain a contract with the state.

The survey's authors allowed that Illi-

nois could improve its quality of data available to the public by disclosing the parent company of a contract recipient. Alka Nayyar, spokeswoman for Central Management Services, says the agency looks to improve transparency "wherever and whenever possible." She says the procurement agency's goal is to provide as much information to the public as is allowed by law without making the process too cumbersome, so it remains easy for smaller as well as larger vendors to participate.

Other states that ranked high in the survey were Indiana, Montana, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Texas and Vermont.

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, co-sponsored by then-U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, required states to create a single searchable Web site that supplies infor-

mation on federal awards. The federal Web site USAspending.gov provides summaries of contracts awarded, broken down by congressional districts.

As of March 30, Illinois ranked 21st among the states for receipt of federal contracts for fiscal year 2009, with 2,639 contractors receiving more than \$1.2 billion for 22,453 transactions. The state received more than \$2.1 billion in awards in fiscal year 2008.

The top districts where work is being performed are: 13th District, Rep. Judy Biggert of Hinsdale (ranked 68th among districts nationwide); 12th District, Rep. Jerry Costello of Belleville (100th); 10th District, Rep. Mark Kirk of Highland Park (123rd); 7th District, Danny Davis of Chicago (125th); and 14th District, Rep. Bill Foster of Geneva (133rd).

Beverley Scobell

Wheaton museum gets WWII Higgins boat

The First Division Museum in Wheaton is now home to one of the few surviving Higgins boats from World War II.

Designed by New Orleans boat builder Andrew Higgins, the simple, wooden boats (also known as Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel or LCVPs) were used extensively throughout the war. They were deployed during the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, as well as in North Africa and Sicily.

The Higgins boats proved successful in getting soldiers across a beach in an amphibious landing. "General Eisenhower once commented that it was Andrew Higgins who won the war for us with his boats," says Steve Hawkins, director of information management for the First Division Museum. "The boats helped dictate the strategy of the war. Soldiers could now land on beaches, rather than port towns."

The boats could carry a full platoon of 36 soldiers and a small vehicle, such as a Jeep. When arriving at the beach, the soldiers could exit through the bow ramp. More than 22,000 Higgins boats were made during World War II, but only a dozen are believed to be still in existence. Some boats were destroyed in action, but a majority were sold after the war. The Higgins boat that will be displayed at the First Division Museum was found in a field in northern France before it was purchased by the museum.

The North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort was responsible for the restoration, which took nearly seven months. Paul Fontenoy, curator of maritime research, says cleaning the boat of nearly 60 years of oil and grime was one of the biggest challenges. From there, everything from the deck up had to be rebuilt, as well as the engine box and steering station, he says. The serial number plate on the boat was missing, but experts believe the boat is a 1943 model and was probably used on D-Day because it was found in northern France, says Hawkins.



A Higgins boat heads to Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, on D-Day, June 6, 1944.



Workers unload the Higgins boat at the First Division Museum in Wheaton.

The First Division Museum plans to display the boat on special occasions until accommodations can be made to have it placed on permanent display.

The First Division Museum will have a ceremony on June 6, the 65th anniversary of D-Day, to dedicate the boat.

Melissa Weissert

Program pays students to get good grades

Chicago Public Schools next month completes the first year of a new program that offers cash to about 4,400 students in 20 of its 125 high schools to study hard, do their homework and get good grades. Straight-A students can earn as much as \$2,000 a year in their first two years. The Paper Project, created by the Education Innovation Laboratory (EdLabs) at Harvard University, is part of Chicago schools' Green for Grade\$ program.

During each five-week progress report period, eligible students can earn \$50 for each A, \$35 for a B and \$20 for any C for performing well in five core classes: English, math, physical education, science and social science.

"This is essentially an experiment," says program manager Katie Ellis. "We're not sure if it will work at this point, but we think it's worth a try."

Chicago Public Schools, the nation's third-largest school system with 650 schools and about 405,000 students, has a graduation rate of 55 percent. Ellis says school officials are looking at "any and all options" to help students finish high school.

"We have a lot of kids who are just socio-economically struggling. If this takes just a little of the burden off their shoulders, from thinking about getting a job or helping out with bills, which a lot of our kids do, it can really have an effect on them."

The second semester payout has not been tallied, but the project paid out \$1,557,000 to 4,050 freshmen — a 94 percent participation rate — in the first semester. Students receive half their earnings every five weeks in their freshman and sophomore years and the balance upon graduation. Other programs

offer incentives to students in their junior and senior years for such accomplishments as taking the ACT test.

EdLabs, which also has similar programs in New York and Washington, D.C., is matching funding with CPS the first two years, using private donations. No taxpayer money goes to the program.

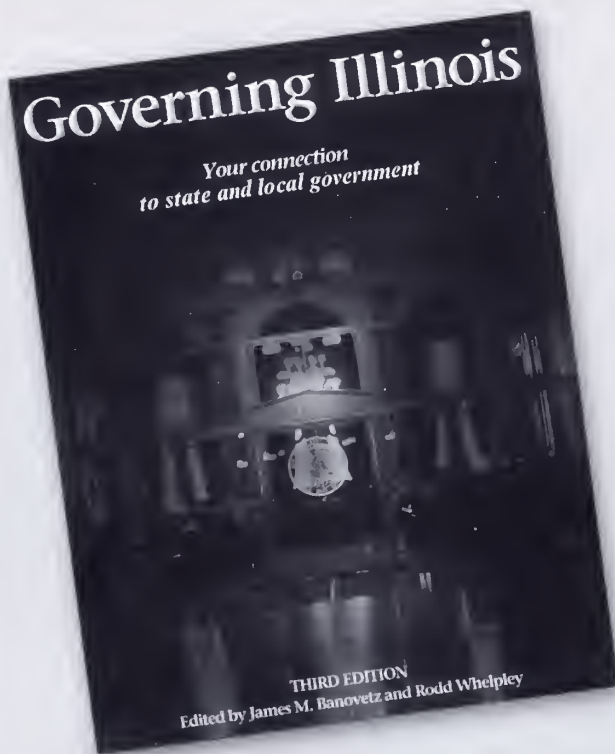
"We have a lot of fundraisers who are very excited about this, who are eager to see it work, to give it a chance and see if this is something that could actually work," Ellis says.

Though release of data evaluating the program, which Harvard controls, is probably at least a year away, Ellis says students have reacted positively.

"They're really excited about it. They seem engaged in their classwork; their parents seem engaged in their classwork."

Beverley Scobell

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A break from the past

Senate President John Cullerton has revived a bipartisan spirit, but how long that lasts depends on upcoming polarizing votes

by Bethany Jaeger

Photograph by Bethany Jaeger



Senate President John Cullerton in his Statehouse office

The soulful sounds of “A Change Is Gonna Come” resonated throughout the Illinois Senate January 14, when flowers and American flags adorned the chamber for a momentous inauguration ceremony.

Then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who had been impeached by the Illinois House five days earlier, fulfilled his constitutional duty by swearing in senators of the 96th General Assembly.

Legislators and guests who filled the chamber sat eerily silent as the governor shifted his weight and went through the formal procedures, including his obligation to introduce Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn, who would take his place two weeks later; Supreme Court Chief Justice Thomas Fitzgerald, who would pound the gavel when all 59 senators voted to convict and remove Blagojevich from office; and Auditor General William Holland, who

would testify about numerous deficiencies in Blagojevich’s administration.

Tension peaked when individual senators stood to describe the challenges ahead and officially nominate their next Senate president. As they spoke, Blagojevich blankly stared at them from the front of the cavernous room.

“Ideally, we’d be electing a Senate president under much different circumstances,” Sen. Louis Viverito said as he

nominated Sen. John Cullerton to lead the chamber. "A historic budget shortfall, the rising unemployment and the trial of our governor — never before has this [body been called upon] to deliberate these serious and solemn issues."

Those are the uncomfortable and foreboding conditions under which Cullerton took the podium, joined by his wife of 30 years, Pamela Cullerton.

As soon as Blagojevich left, the new Senate president injected humor back into the room. The Chicago Democrat recalled that when he asked his wife why they've stayed together so long, she said, "We both love the same man."

He congratulated the new Senate Minority Leader, Christine Radogno of Lemont, the first female to hold the honor, as well as her Republican leadership team. Then he quipped, "We hope you will keep the job of minority leaders for many years to come."

He struck a more serious tone as he spelled out an agenda to set a new spirit of bipartisan cooperation within the Senate, with the House and also with the executive branch. Cooperation is necessary as they try to dig Illinois out of a \$12.4 billion budget deficit and smooth out the economic turbulence made worse by a national recession.

The Illinois General Assembly, Cullerton said, would be measured by its ability to break with the past and restore integrity and confidence in the system in a short amount of time.

Cullerton, along with Quinn as governor, has helped to completely refresh the atmosphere within the Capitol. While members of both political parties have said so far, so good, Republicans, in particular, ask how long that bipartisan tone will last. By the end of May, the legislature is expected to vote on whether the state will raise taxes and fees as a way to restore Illinois' fiscal health and to spur the economy with a major public works program.

Democrats have the majority in both legislative chambers, and Cullerton's extra majority of 37 members — compared with the Republicans' 22 — gives him extra wiggle room if a few of his politically vulnerable Democrats want to avoid voting in favor of tax increases. He only needs 30 votes to approve major pieces of legislation before May 31.

His ability to advance measures to the governor's desk regardless of Republican support is strengthened by his close personal and professional ties to House Speaker Michael Madigan.

His ability to advance measures to the governor's desk regardless of Republican support is strengthened by his close personal and professional ties to House Speaker Michael Madigan. Cullerton is the godfather of Madigan's only son. They've been friends since 1979, when Cullerton began a 12-year tenure in the House, including six years on the speaker's leadership team.

Madigan says he perceived Cullerton's intelligence, his law background and his work ethic as a good combination with his "very good personality for working with people."

"If you're going to be a leader among these people, and if you are going to be able to lead them, you have to have a feel for how they view things, how they view you," Madigan says. "And John had a good sense for that when he first came here, and of course, he's made it better."

Radogno notes Cullerton's ability to articulate his point of view and to respect the positions of others.

"I view him as someone who is generally public-policy oriented. Obviously, he's a political being, but he comes across to me as someone that has a general interest in public policy. And I really appreciate that about him and respect it."

Cullerton's longtime Republican co-chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Sen. Kirk Dillard of Hinsdale, also is a friend. Dillard says: "I think John is off to a very fine start on all fronts. And I kid him that sometimes he's too good

from my partisan Republican perspective. It's a compliment, but I wish he would screw up so that my party could take back some seats."

With the strong relationship between the Senate president and the House speaker, the Democratic majority is capable of producing a Democratic-only budget for state operations. To approve a major capital construction program, however, some House Republican votes will be needed.

Madigan says he's already coordinating with Cullerton to prepare his members for those tough votes.

"That's where working together really counts. Things are moving around the building all the time. And if the presiding officers are coordinated, then some of those moving parts can be put into an equation that gets the job done."

How Cullerton will handle end-of-session negotiations could be foreshadowed by his approach so far.

He's been seen on numerous occasions leaning over and whispering into Madigan's ear and laughing during a public hearing of a special bicameral committee on government reforms. And he's often seen meeting one-on-one with Radogno, whether after a committee when they're the only ones in the room or during a committee hearing before members cast a vote.

Cullerton says that while Democrats were the minority party in the Senate for 10 years, he learned that it pays to at least listen to what the opposing party has to say.

"In the end of the day, I don't know if [Republicans are] going to agree with us philosophically," he says. "There's a reason there's two different parties. But I just think it's a much nicer workplace. And maybe, just maybe, the fact that we are communicating, I think you get a better work product."

Cullerton grew up in the Village of Winfield in DuPage County, but his family history is rooted in Chicago politics and government. The city's former 20th Street became Cullerton Street, named after his great-grandfather's brother, Edward Cullerton, a state representative who served in the Old State Capitol for one term in 1873. Then Edward went back to local government



House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton, who are close personal friends, laugh during a special joint committee focusing on government and ethics reforms in March.

and still is one of the longest-serving Chicago aldermen, according to John Cullerton.

The Senate president says he didn't discover the depth of his roots until after he ran for the Illinois House in 1978. His family was one of the original settlers in Chicago in 1835 and is the longest-serving family in Chicago politics, particularly around the 38th Ward on the northwest side.

Cullerton says his interest in running for the Illinois House came from another relative, Parky Cullerton, Cook County tax assessor under Mayor Richard J. Daley from the 1950s through the '70s. He also gained valuable experience and contacts by being elected as a delegate to the 1976 Democratic National Convention in New York, where Jimmy Carter was nominated for president.

By 1976, Cullerton had earned his bachelor's degree and law degree from Loyola University in Chicago, served in the Illinois National Guard and entered the public sector as an assistant public defender for the City of Chicago.

He joined the private sector in 1988 at a Chicago law firm now called

Thompson Coburn Fagel Haber, where he remains a partner. Also that year, he clocked his fastest marathon at age 40.

After spending 12 years in the House, he was appointed to fill then-state Sen. Dawn Clark Netsch's seat when she became state comptroller in 1991. Cullerton won election on his own a year later.

He has since earned the honor of sponsoring more bills than any other legislator and of having the most bills signed by the governor between 2003 and 2006.

Comedy is a common thread throughout his public service. He performs at his annual fundraiser at the Second City Chicago theater, which has hosted comedians John Belushi and Bill Murray. Cullerton's impersonation of Mayor Daley won him the crown of Mr. Wonderful from the Conference of Women Legislators in 1979. He still stows the purple crown in a cabinet near his office desk in the Capitol.

He covertly tried to win a different crown for his longtime friend and former chief of staff, Rep. Sara Feigenholtz, who now shares his legislative district. He

secretly submitted her photo to a truckers' association for its annual queen contest. She unknowingly became a finalist.

"The only thing I don't like about John is that he does not laugh about my jokes," Feigenholtz says. "He laughs at his jokes."

Joking aside, she says even their arguments are even-keeled, intellectual disagreements. And consistent with being a lawyer, Cullerton tries to get others to think through their positions. "He actually encourages me through his even-handedness in getting something rather than nothing."

Feigenholtz, a Chicago Cubs baseball fan, can attest to Cullerton's several dichotomies. He's a loyal fan of the Chicago White Sox; yet, his district includes the Chicago Cubs' neighborhood of Wrigleyville.

He's not a "Cub hater," says friend Barry Maram, former president of the 44th Ward Democratic Organization and current director of the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services. Maram supported Cullerton's failed congressional campaign in the 1994 race against embattled U.S. Rep. Dan



Senate President John Cullerton presides over a Democratic majority with seven votes to spare.

Rostenkowski, a Chicago Democrat, who eventually lost his bid for his 19th term in the general election.

Cullerton's paradox is furthered by being the senator who represents Blagojevich. In fact, they live down the street from each other on the north side of Chicago. Yet, Cullerton led his chamber in convicting and ousting Blagojevich from office.

When Blagojevich's criminal indictment came down from the feds last month, Cullerton said: "I think it's a sad situation because he is the father of a couple of kids. He lives down the street from me, and it's always sad when stuff like this happens. But, at the same time, I can't imagine what this place would be like if he were still the governor trying to solve the problems that we have with the incredible deficits that we have."

As Senate president, Cullerton has quickened his pace in the Statehouse and worked longer hours, recently returning his first phone call of the day at 6:38 a.m. to Paula Wolff, senior executive at the Chicago Metropolitan 2020 civic and business organization. They've worked closely together since 2005 to reform the state's cumbersome and complicated system that addresses criminal activity.

Wolff says Cullerton resolved controversies in the least controversial ways.

"He is an absolutely fabulous combination of a lively, interesting, amusing person on the one hand, and a serious

determined effective legislator on the other," she says. "And it's a fabulous combination, really."

As a legislative leader, Cullerton has to forge the Senate Democratic agenda, which ranges from enacting a major capital program for road and school construction projects to offering property tax relief if income taxes rise. He has to negotiate with the influential subgroups of legislators who belong to the Latino, African-American, Chicago suburban and downstate caucuses, all of whom have used their leverage in the past to get what they want.

A new sense of partnership could diminish that need, says Sen. Martin Sandoval, a Chicago Democrat and Latino Caucus leader who frequently clashed with the former Democratic Senate President Emil Jones Jr.

"We're not looking forward to having to leverage him at the end of session, as has traditionally been done in the last six years," Sandoval says. "It's a new day, and he's a real partner with us, individually and as a caucus. And I think that he's off to a great start."

The way in which Cullerton became chamber president demonstrates his leadership style. He made clear his intent to return some power back to individual legislators, establishing a more open process where each member has more control over his or her bills.

The expectations were for the new president to be a facilitator, a compro-

miser, someone who could unite the caucus. Even more so, members wanted someone who could improve relations with the House and the governor's office, although some expressed concern about Cullerton being too close to Madigan.

Cullerton dismisses that concern.

"Only in Illinois would that be news. 'Oh, the Democratic speaker and the Democratic president of the Senate get along with each other.'"

Cullerton wasn't unanimously elected, although he won a majority over the runner-up, Sen. James Clayborne of Belleville. Upon his election, Cullerton named Clayborne his second-in-command as majority leader.

Clayborne says the Senate president is laser-focused on his job to represent the concerns of Democrats from throughout the state.

"It's always new when you're the leader because you intend to please everybody, but at some point, you recognize that you can't," Clayborne says. "You have to do the right thing, and John has done a tremendous job on building consensus and adapting to the office so that he can move the agenda of the Senate Democrats forward."

Building a consensus sometimes has overshadowed Cullerton's own interests, including some that had been rather firm positions in the past.

Cullerton was the chief sponsor on such Chicago-centric bills as the so-called 7 percent rule for Chicago property taxes. The program caps the taxable amount of residential properties' assessed values, which started skyrocketing in 2000. He also has favored reducing local property taxes as the primary source of funding for public education, which would require an increase in state income taxes and an expansion of the state sales tax.

He's sponsored gun control measures that divide Democrats of varying geographies. He supports stricter gun laws, to the dismay of downstate gun rights advocates. He succeeded in enacting a state law that requires guns to be stored or locked and out of reach of children, as well as a mandate to conduct background checks of people who buy firearms at gun shows.

Having been on the opposite side of Cullerton's agenda, gun-rights lobbyist Todd Vandermyde describes him as a

“formidable opponent.” He says the Illinois State Rifle Association is taking a wait-and-see approach to gauge how Cullerton the Senate president differs from Cullerton the state senator.

“He has a very diverse caucus: down-state, central state, suburban. It’s not just Chicago,” Vandermyde says. “So we’re waiting to see — we’re cautiously optimistic — does he want to be the president of the Senate for the state of Illinois, or does he want to be the Senate president from Chicago?”

Cullerton also negotiated the controversial statewide ban on smoking in restaurants, bowling alleys and other public places. He’s considered a national expert on driving safety, having crafted the state’s mandatory seat belt law and child safety provisions in cars.

Using state policies to shape behavior, he says, is obligatory in the case of driving safety and smoking prevention.

“In those cases, we’re talking about *saving lives*. I think government has the right. Even Libertarians agree that there should be stoplights,” he says.

Radogno says while Cullerton always has been up front about his agenda to prioritize public health and safety, there’s a fine line when trying to influence legal behavior. She cites the Senate’s recent approval of increasing the state sales taxes on cigarettes. Shortly after the federal government levied a 62-cent increase on each pack, the state Senate narrowly approved phasing in a \$1 increase on top of that.

“I think at that point, you’re more than influencing,” Radogno says. “I mean, you’re almost punishing.”

It took a last-minute, closed-door meeting between Cullerton and Madigan before the Senate president could twist a couple of arms to secure the 30 votes needed to pass the cigarette tax increase. Twenty-six members still voted against the measure.

Cullerton says the close vote indicates a difficult road ahead for future tax increases. “This was the first bill that required people to actually vote for a tax,” he said after last month’s vote. “And you can see it’s not easy for people to do that. Unfortunately, we’re probably going to have to do a lot more.”

The measure was in the House at press time.

Madigan says he personally worked with some Senate Democratic members to support Cullerton’s bid for chamber president; yet, the two leaders don’t always agree.

For instance, Madigan says he disagreed with the way Cullerton chose to negotiate with Jones and Blagojevich during the past few years of political stalemates.

“I thought that during the Jones presidency, that [Cullerton] could have taken a different approach to what he did,” Madigan says. “He disagreed with my view, and he did what he did, which was basically to bide his time and work with people in the Senate, looking toward the day when there’d be a new Senate president. And I would say that the results of his election prove that he knew what he was doing.”

Madigan says that more recently, the two disagreed about the size of a so-called mini-capital plan, which resulted in a \$3 billion investment in repairing existing roads, bridges and mass transit systems.

“I think my view would have been a little more restrictive in terms of what the spending would be,” Madigan says. “His was a little more expansive. I acceded to his thoughts.”

Radogno, the Senate GOP leader, says Cullerton has allowed more Republican-backed bills to be called for debate. “The whole decorum in the chamber is positive. And it had really deteriorated. So that is just refreshing.”

But the bipartisan, bicameral cooperation could be a double-edged sword for Republicans.

As Dillard says, “It will be good to get rid of gridlock and pettiness, but it also means that if the Democrats stop infighting, they can steamroll the Republicans.”

Radogno counters that while the Democrats could steamroll the Republicans if they really wanted to, she’s not certain they would want to, given that tax increases during an economic recession could be “pretty toxic.”

Then again, Cullerton has seven members to spare and still has enough Democratic votes to approve an income tax increase without GOP support. His approach may mirror that of Madigan’s.

“On the tough decisions of this session, I do not expect cooperation or

Cullerton will go down in history as the Senate president who led his chamber in convicting a sitting governor and removing him from office for good.

support from the Republicans,” the speaker says. “They can go ahead and pleasantly surprise me if they wish, but I don’t think it’ll happen.”

Cullerton often jokes about his low risk of losing a majority by cooperating with Republicans.

In fact, Dillard says he warns his Republican peers that Cullerton may be jovial and helpful on the Senate floor, but he will cut out their hearts to protect his candidates during election season.

“‘You can’t get lulled by John’s charm,’ I tell our target members, ‘because he’s a wily, partisan Democrat,’” Dillard says.

Cullerton’s partisan power is likely to increase, particularly because Madigan expects to join forces with him during the 2010 campaign cycle.

“We will, we will, we will,” Madigan says. “Here, again, that never happened with Jones, but we will.”

Cullerton will go down in history as the Senate president who led his chamber in convicting a sitting governor and removing him from office for good. But in doing so, he also became the Senate president who revived the power of rank-and-file senators and opened the chamber doors to a bipartisan, bicameral cooperation in some of the toughest economic and fiscal conditions the state has seen to date.

The measure of his success will, indeed, be whether he can break with the past and restore integrity to the process. □

Counting Illinois

Much is at stake when the federal government takes its census of Americans

by Daniel C. Vock

A discussion about the federal census, the once-a-decade head count scheduled for April 1, 2010, drew nearly 200 people to an auditorium on Chicago's south side this March, more than a year before the formal tally takes place.

The crowd that filled the Illinois Institute of Technology's campus near the Bronzeville neighborhood was a mix of civic leaders, federal officials, ministers, entrepreneurs and job seekers.

The event organizers said they wanted to encourage the public — and especially African-Americans and Hispanics — to participate in the census, despite widespread distrust of government in those communities. The organizers also found that most of the attendees didn't appreciate how big an effect the census has on who represents them in government and how much money their communities could receive.

"People don't know what the census represents. ... When people hear that information, it's like hearing it for the first time," says Rael Jackson, one of the organizers.

The census' main role, prescribed by the U.S. Constitution, is to determine how many seats in the U.S. House of Representatives each state receives. Over time, though, it's taken on far greater importance. The census serves as the basis for rebalancing power at nearly every level of government, distributing federal and state taxpayer money and even helping businesses decide where to build new stores or factories.

Educating the public, especially what the U.S. Census Bureau calls the "hard-to-count" populations, will be a major obstacle in the way of a successful 2010 census. But it's far from the only one. And there's plenty for Illinois hanging in the balance.

At stake are power and money. Lots of power and lots of money.

Illinois could lose yet another seat in the U.S. House, giving the state 18 members in the 435-member chamber, down from a peak of 27 before the 1940 census. Illinois lost one House seat after the 2000 census and two after both of the previous counts. The loss would be exacerbated by the fact that other Midwestern states and other manufacturing states are also expected to lose clout on Capitol Hill.

The rebalancing of power doesn't stop in Washington, D.C. The state House and Senate, county boards and city councils all must adjust to the new census counts with new district maps, a process that inevitably creates winners and losers at every level.

If that weren't enough, more than \$377 billion of the money the federal government sends to states and cities every year depends on formulas that use census data. Money for everything from Medicaid to highway funding depends on the population counts and other information from the census.

One report to Congress estimated that the biggest counties in the country would lose \$3.6 billion in federal funds over a decade — or \$2,913 for every missed person — because of undercounts in the

2000 census. Cook County alone lost out on \$193 million.

And next year's count could hardly come at a worse time.

The economy, a growing population and shifting attitudes toward government since the September 2001 terrorist attacks make the census harder.

Also, the Census Bureau normally relies on states, localities and nonprofit groups to explain the process to the public and encourage residents to participate. But all of those partners are strapped for cash — indeed, many are laying people off as revenues plummet — and may not be able to help out as much as usual.

Meanwhile, the actual task of counting people also becomes more difficult because of the downturn, especially due to the housing crisis that precipitated the economic collapse. Census-takers must go block-by-block to determine which housing units are inhabited, a task made more difficult when so many foreclosed homes are abandoned and families move in with one another.

Events in Washington, D.C., also have added to the difficulties. Congressional investigators last year called the census a "high-risk area" and repeatedly criticized the Census Bureau under President George W. Bush's administration for not obtaining enough money, falling behind schedule and bungling key contracts.

Even with an influx of cash from the federal stimulus package, the agency was left in limbo for months as President Barack Obama struggled to find a



Photographs courtesy of the U.S. Census Bureau

The U.S. Census Bureau has hired staff to conduct address canvassing in preparation for the 2010 count.

secretary for the Department of Commerce and then a census director. He eventually settled on former Washington state Gov. Gary Locke as Commerce secretary and University of Michigan professor Robert Groves as head of the Census Bureau.

The result is that the Census Bureau has struggled to meet its goals. It had to ditch plans, for example, for census-takers to use handheld computers to record data during in-person interviews with people who don't return their forms, a move that is expected to add \$3 billion to the cost. With a price tag of \$14 billion to \$15 billion, the 2010 count is expected to be the most expensive census ever.

Still, the process of counting every man, woman and child in the United States has already started.

After updating its maps last year, teams of census employees are now fanning out through neighborhoods to register the addresses of residences. They'll note changes, such as a building of condos where a single-family house stood 10 years ago, to try to ensure that all households receive a questionnaire.

In January 2010, the Census Bureau

plans to launch an advertising campaign to encourage people to mail in surveys they'll start to receive in March.

In 2010, unlike in past censuses, all households will receive a "short form" that's supposed to take only 10 minutes to fill out. The six-question short form sticks to basic facts, such as a respondent's age, gender, Hispanic origin, race, relationship to the head of the household and whether residents own their homes.

The Census Bureau has eliminated the "long form" that it previously sent to one of every six households. The more exhaustive form was used to find out more details, such as income, education and health care coverage. Now, though, the Census Bureau gathers that data through a separate effort called the American Community Survey, which is sent to 3 million households every year.

To get a complete count, the Census Bureau will send employees to households that don't return their mail-in forms, a far more expensive prospect.

Chances are, the bureau will have to follow up with a lot of households.

Over the last few decades, Americans have grown worse at returning census

forms, despite massive increases in the amount of money the federal government has spent to encourage them to do so.

Robert Goldenkoff, the director for strategic issues at the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Congress' investigative arm, notes that in 1970, the federal government spent \$14 (in 2010 dollars) to count each household, and 78 percent of households mailed in their forms. Next year, the Census Bureau will spend roughly \$100 per household, and it only expects 64 percent of households to return their surveys.

"The Census Bureau is spending more money and basically accomplishing the same results," Goldenkoff says.

Minorities are far less likely to return their forms than whites.

That's why so many groups are focusing their efforts on trying to persuade African-Americans and Hispanics, especially, to participate in the survey.

The event at IIT, for example, was organized by Real Men Cook, a nationwide organization that promotes the importance of men in their families, particularly in the African-American community. Jackson, a vice president for the group, worked with

Yvette Moyo, Real Men Cook's founder, to put on the gathering.

Jackson worries that African-Americans who distrust the government — especially men — might not participate in the census. He says many have had run-ins with the criminal justice system, and others may worry about jeopardizing federal benefits, such as food stamps for the women they live with if the federal government discovered the men were living there, too.

Moyo says Real Men Cook can do outreach during its events, such as its annual Father's Day barbecue, to dispel myths and tell people about the benefits of participating in the census. She says the idea that funding for communities depends on residents' participation is an especially strong selling point.

Meanwhile, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) is working with the Census Bureau on a national campaign urging Latinos to take part. The effort, dubbed "*Ya es hora. ¡Hagase contar!*" (It's time. Make yourself count!) hopes to correct the estimated 3 percent undercount of Latinos in the 2000 census, which NALEO says left 1 million Latinos uncoun- ted.

The Latino group worries that many in the Hispanic community distrust all parts of the federal government after several high-profile immigration raids in the past three years. Other factors, such as high mobility rates and large families, could also complicate the counting of Latinos.

The Spanish-language TV network Univision is joining several Latino advocacy groups and the Service Employees International Union in the effort, which is similar to drives in recent years to encourage Latinos to become naturalized citizens and to vote in the 2008 elections.

Arturo Vargas, NALEO's executive director, says he'd like to arrange a half-hour TV show on a Spanish-language network that would help Spanish speakers fill out the forms.

Next year, the Census Bureau will mail forms in both English and Spanish to 13 million households, although there are worries they won't be sufficient for the 34 million U.S. residents who the census estimates speak Spanish.

Plus, the Census Bureau is also making a special effort to hire census-takers who

Check out *Illinois Issues* online this month to see a map of the hardest-to-count areas of Illinois at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>.

know both the language and customs of the areas where they'll be going door to door. It is encouraging governments and other groups to start Complete Count Committees to coordinate outreach efforts. And its January advertising blitz will be tailored to reach different pockets of the population.

Illinois groups that are ramping up census outreach programs are also focusing on the black, Hispanic and other hard-to-count populations.

Not only are the hard-to-count populations the most difficult to contact, but they are often also the ones who would benefit most from being fully accounted for, explains Mary Schaafsma, project manager for the census and redistricting for the League of Women Voters of Illinois.

In one outreach effort, the league hopes to teach high school students about the importance of the census, so they, in turn, will encourage their parents to take part. Schaafsma says the group plans to work with other grassroots organizations to encourage efforts in churches and libraries.

That's the type of work the Joyce Foundation and nine other regional philanthropies want to encourage through a joint effort announced in April to spend \$1 million on promoting census outreach efforts.

"So far as we know... this appears to be the nation's largest investment to date in the 2010 census effort in any single state," says Lawrence Hansen, vice president of the Joyce Foundation, a Chicago-based organization that focuses its work on the Great Lakes region. (Hansen is also chairman of *Illinois Issues*' advisory board.)

Promoting the census isn't one of the central focuses of the Joyce Foundation, Hansen says, but the census' outcomes affect all of the policy areas Joyce regularly weighs in on, such as workforce training, education reform and environmental issues.

Hansen is making a similar pitch to the leaders of philanthropies in other Midwestern states, including Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

The Land of Lincoln likely will lose a U.S. House seat after next year's census, according to a December analysis by the Washington, D.C.,-area firm Election Data Services. But Illinois would have plenty of company in the Midwest. Also expected to lose a House seat are Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Missouri. Ohio could lose two.

Other industrialized states in the Northeast — Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania — also likely will forfeit a seat.

Many of the states expected to make gains in the next census are the same ones hit hardest by the housing crisis that touched off the current recession. Arizona, California, Florida and Nevada far outpace the rest of the nation in foreclosure rates; all but California are expected to gain House seats. Arizona and Florida may be in line for two. Texas would by far be the biggest winner, with a projected gain of four seats.

That makes the situation tighter than it's been for at least the last 30 years, says Kimball Brace, Election Data Services' founder, who has worked with both the Illinois Democratic Party and the State Board of Elections on redistricting-related tasks.

Under his latest projections, Oregon would gain a sixth seat by just two people. California would lose a seat by 18 people.

How well the census is taken in Illinois could mean the difference between whether the state loses or keeps a seat, says Brace, a member of the Commerce Department's 2010 Census Advisory Committee.

"My advice to people in Illinois is to be more focused on this and make sure the census count is done properly and done completely. In your instance, a seat may well be on the tipping edge." □

Daniel C. Vock is a reporter for Washington, D.C.-based Stateline.org.

Clearing the air

Illinois looks to the federal government for research on whether investing in clean coal technology is worth the risk

by Jamey Dunn

Although concern over climate change has escalated in recent years, America won't stop burning coal anytime soon. Coal-fired power plants generate half the nation's electricity, while creating more than a quarter of all the harmful carbon dioxide pollution in the United States.

The coal industry is feeling pressure from all sides to clean up its act by reducing carbon emissions that contribute to global warming. Various methods are being tested. The technology that is gaining the most support from the scientific community and policymakers is carbon sequestration, which would trap pollutants deep underground for possibly thousands of years.

Sequestration often is partnered with coal gasification, a process that turns coal into gas and allows certain pollutants to be removed. To date, no large project in the United States has illustrated sequestration's viability on a mass commercial scale.

The industry's reluctance to independently fund any major project using so-called clean coal technologies — and the uncertainty that surrounds almost every aspect of the issue — has people in coal-rich states such as Illinois looking to the new federal administration for hints about whether investing in unproven technologies justifies the risk.

U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin says he is not encouraged by the reaction in his chamber to a new bill that aims to make coal

plants cut their emissions, as well as fund carbon sequestration research. Durbin says he finds little Republican support, and a dozen Democrats already have voiced concerns or opposition to the bill.

Supporters of the measure, which would push the coal industry to address some aspects of global warming, have to “start off in a hole trying to come out of it,” he says.

Durbin adds he worries that if so-called clean coal research cannot find backing under President Barack Obama, who vocally supported “clean coal” during his campaign, the issue might be set back by years. Opponents in the coal and power industries are “arguing against the uncertainty” of what is to come.

There is plenty to be unsure about.

The main risks for the private sector boil down to money. John Mead, director of the Coal Research Center at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, says because the technology is unproven, it's hard to predict what future costs could be associated with carbon sequestration and coal gasification projects. Science has not proven the amount of electricity that plants could produce or the amount of hazardous carbon emissions that plants could divert from the atmosphere.

If power plants with advanced technologies fail to produce as much power or reduce as much pollution as promised, investments made by the

private sector may not pay off.

Mead says in a worst-case scenario, companies that borrow money to fund such plants may not make enough profit to repay the loans.

So far, investors have been unable to count on backing from the federal government.

The U.S. Department of Energy has pulled support from projects when costs rose. Hitting home in Illinois, for instance, the administration under former President George W. Bush stalled plans for FutureGen, a proposed near-zero emission coal plant in Mattoon that is touted by many as a pivotal research project and public-private partnership. Officials cited estimated cost increases that would have exceeded \$1 billion. Since then, the U.S. Government Accountability Office reported that the administration overestimated the cost by \$500 million.

Regardless of original estimates, Energy Secretary Steven Chu now says that the plant could cost more than \$2.3 billion dollars to build, partially because of the rising cost of materials.

With a new administration comes new priorities and possibilities.

The federal stimulus package includes a potential boon for Illinois. A \$1 billion grant is earmarked for fossil energy research, which many in this state hope will go toward resurrecting FutureGen, which was slated to test three technologies at one location.

Chu's public statements feed that hope, as he has said that he still is considering moving forward with some version of the FutureGen concept.

William Brandt, chairman of the Illinois Finance Authority, says he feels optimistic that the Energy Department will support the project. He says he has "every expectation and hope that FutureGen is going to get back on track rather quickly."

Obama has indicated that the coal industry will have to pursue cutting-edge technologies, such as those proposed for FutureGen, that reduce carbon emissions. If not, power plants risk becoming obsolete in an increasingly climate-conscious political atmosphere.

In January 2008, then-presidential candidate Obama told the *San Francisco Chronicle* about his hopes for cutting carbon emissions by making industries pay for the amount they pollute. He caused a stir when he said the so-called cap-and-trade policy would "bankrupt" any new coal plants that were built without technologies to reduce carbon output.

As a result, plans to construct new coal plants are being canceled and delayed nationwide, indicating the industry's concern that Obama's statement may become a reality.

If the coal industry were to move toward sequestration, the possibility of cleaner-burning coal could have a huge impact on the future of Illinois.

This state holds more than 40 billion tons of recoverable coal reserves, according to the Illinois State Geological Survey. However, Illinois coal has a high sulfur content and when burned, emits pollutants that lead to acid rain.

Mining and use of Illinois coal declined after federal law enforced tougher pollution standards in 1990. The U.S. Clean Air Act was designed to address acid rain by limiting the amount of sulfur, along with other pollutants, emitted by coal plants.

Since the law took effect, the amount of coal mined in Illinois, the number of mines throughout the state and the jobs associated with coal have been cut almost by half, according to Phil Gonet, president of the Illinois Coal Association.



A rendering of the Taylorville Energy Center, which would use coal gasification and carbon sequestration technologies to reduce pollution

The cap-and-trade program restricts the amount of pollution plants are allowed to emit and then fines them if they exceed the allowable limit. The policy drove some power companies to use lower-sulfur coal because it was cheaper than installing scrubbers to remove sulfur after the coal was burned.

Gonet says that Illinois plants began to import western coal, even though the transportation costs could reach five times the price of the coal itself, because they determined it was the cheapest option.

While a cap-and-trade program aimed at sulfur in the 1990s hurt the coal industry in Illinois, the current focus is on reducing global warming. A new cap-and-trade program would target carbon emissions, potentially creating a resurgence in demand for Illinois coal.

Gonet says that if the industry applied carbon capture technology on a commercial level, the sulfur content of the state's coal would be less of a factor because pollutants could be kept out of the air through the sequestration process.

"If clean coal technology can be developed and deployed, it would be huge for Illinois coal," he says.

However, if coal-fired power plants don't find a way to cut carbon emissions, and if state or federal laws are enacted to financially penalize them for their emissions, then the companies might seek out such cleaner fuels as natural gas.

In short, it could be a death sentence for the coal industry.

Many environmentalists say coal's days should be numbered. Opponents of

burning fossil fuels think that continuing to view coal as an acceptable power source and investing public money in research are big mistakes.

The Illinois Sierra Club, for instance, protests any new proposed coal mines or power plants in the state. Becki Clayborn, a Sierra Club regional representative based in Chicago, says that there can never be “clean coal” because the mining process itself releases pollutants and damages local environments.

Instead, Clayborn says, the government should invest time and money into researching such renewable energy sources as solar and wind rather than trying to bring “old dirty” power sources up to new standards.

“We need to upgrade,” she says, adding that she realizes that coal power plants are not going away anytime soon. In the meantime, however, the pollution they create must be curbed, she says.

She adds that while the country transitions from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources, it is the government’s responsibility to protect people and the environment by making the industry address environmental concerns.

“It’s the health of everyone that’s at stake here,” she says.

Many conservation advocates question the industry’s commitment to cleaning up its act. They view the public support of clean coal by the industry, including an advertising and public relations campaign, as lip service until some

major industry-funded research projects move forward.

This is Reality, a national organization funded by the Alliance for Climate Protection, the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, the Natural Resources Defense Council and the League of Conservation Voters, has created its own advertising campaign that draws attention to the lack of large-scale clean coal power plants in the nation.

However, not all environmentalists agree that opposition to cleaner coal technology is realistic. John Thompson, director of the coal transition project for the Clean Air Task Force based in Boston, works for an organization that combats air pollution. He says because the nation relies so heavily on coal for its electricity, those concerned with global warming should support research that aims to cut carbon emissions at coal-fired power plants.

“At the end of the day, we have two choices. [Carbon dioxide] is either going to be vented, and we know what the consequences of venting it are, or we can store it.”

According to Thompson, solar and wind power technologies will not be reliable enough to meet America’s demands in the near future. He says research should be dedicated to renewable energy and to cleaning up existing energy sources, creating a diverse energy portfolio while emitting the least amount of greenhouse gas possible.

Many conservation advocates question the industry’s commitment to cleaning up its act. They view the public support of clean coal by the industry . . . as lip service until some major industry-funded research projects move forward.

“If we don’t do that, everything the environmental movement has achieved over the last 100 years goes out the window. All the species and habitats we have protected will be at risk from the temperature increase,” he says.

The government could spur the technology’s advancement, he adds, by funding research and putting a cap-and-trade program in place to penalize plants that generate unacceptable levels of carbon dioxide emissions.

Industry insiders, investment experts and researchers all agree that Illinois could play an integral part in the development of carbon capture and storage.

Image courtesy of the FutureGen Alliance



An artist's depiction of FutureGen, the near-zero emissions coal plant proposed for construction in Mattoon.



Tomasz Wiltowski is assistant director of the Southern Illinois University Carbondale's Coal Research Center. The photograph shows equipment used to heat coal for a coal gasification project he leads.

Illinois has a vested economic interest in developing the technology, but it also has the right environmental conditions.

According to the State Geological Survey, the Illinois Basin, a large depression under the state, could prove to be one of the best places in the nation for storing carbon. The state agency is partnering with the federal Department of Energy to test the carbon storage capabilities of the basin. The project, which is in Decatur, held a groundbreaking ceremony in April to celebrate the completion of an 8,000-foot-deep well where carbon pollutants generated by an ethanol plant associated with Archer Daniels Midland will be stored. While no coal is involved, the technology is being tested to apply to coal plants in the future.

Illinois legislators are starting to show support for other "clean coal" projects in the state.

The General Assembly approved a bill during its last session that allows the first step toward building a plant using carbon sequestration near Taylorville. The legislation initiates a study to determine whether the Taylorville Energy Center, proposed by a Nebraska-based power company, Tenaska Inc., would be feasible. If the project were to break ground, it would be backed by state funds.

Another measure that advanced through the Senate this year would approve up to \$3 billion in bonding authority for the Illinois Finance Authority to invest in carbon sequestration and renewable energy.

According to the authority's Brandt, up to \$50 million of that funding could go toward resurrecting FutureGen. He says Illinois could become an energy pioneer state, similar to California.

"Illinois is going to come uniquely to the forefront of energy production," he says.

But he adds that private-sector companies should share the financial risk with the public sector because private investors have the most to gain financially if the technology proves to control pollution.

Joe Lucas, a spokesman for the coal industry's lobbying organization, America's Power, says that the private sector is willing to take some of the risk, but the government also has to reassure investors that they won't go it alone.

According to Lucas, the No. 1 challenge to carbon sequestration is the initial cost of testing. He says emission standards are necessary, but they should be set at realistic levels that plants can meet and then step up as the technology improves.

Patience will be needed to see the changes through, he adds. "Some people think we can just throw the car in reverse, and that's not a very doable process."

The federal proposal, sponsored by Democratic U.S. Reps. Henry Waxman of California and Edward Markey of Massachusetts, may be one of the first steps toward creating parameters for regulation and securing initial funding for research. The measure includes funding for carbon sequestration and a cap-and-trade program in an attempt to control overall emissions. The legislation does not yet specifically address the controversial subject of carbon credit distribution, a critical point for the industry because the more credits a plant would receive, the more pollution it could release without having to pay fines.

Gonet of the Illinois Coal Association says that the 1990 cap-and-trade system for sulfur was successful because the allowances were doled out based on need, but Obama has proposed auctioning off the carbon credits as a way to raise revenue.

Many in the coal industry oppose the idea, saying it would artificially inflate the cost of electricity that comes from fossil fuels.

Lucas of America's Power describes the bill as "pragmatic" and says that it is a great starting point for dialogue.

"We're just happy to have the conversation going," he says.

But because the federal legislation currently lacks the necessary support, a conversation may be all that results this year.

Durbin says it's important to work out incentives and penalties to push the coal industry into reducing carbon emissions. The government, he adds, must help private interests with the initial investment needed to create a plant that would prove the technology.

"There is no single company that could take on a project of this magnitude," he says.

If he were in the private sector looking to the government for a signal, Durbin says he "would be wary knowing that change is coming, and it has to come."

But the two questions of when and how still remain. □

Rough road

Illinois' infrastructure needs have long been overlooked. At what price?

by Kurt Erickson

Ron Hancock's big rigs haul aluminum cable, steel and lumber across hundreds of thousands of miles each year.

But there are few instances outside Illinois when the 26 drivers for his Olney-based trucking firm have to routinely go far out of their way to avoid bridges that can't handle the weight of his semitrailers, he says. "You can go to any neighboring state, and they have roads that are in better shape. It's a huge problem."

It is for people such as Hancock that Illinois' political leaders are again trying to find a way to pay for a massive overhaul of the state's roads, bridges and public buildings.

Although the Illinois Department of Transportation has continued fixing roads and repairing bridges despite a six-year funding drought, the lack of a significant bricks-and-mortar improvement program has caught up with the state.

When money for the state's last public works program began to dry up in 2003, the state had about 1,425 miles of road-way that needed improvement. Now, IDOT says that figure has grown to 2,314 miles. Throughout the next five years, 4,252 miles of roads will need to be improved, the agency says.

As for bridges, IDOT said in March that an estimated 1,300 bridges — out of almost 26,000 in the state — will need improvements during the next five years.

All told, officials hope to spend at least \$14 billion on road and bridge improvements under the latest capital improve-

ment plan. That amount, however, is probably not enough.

"I'd say that's on the low end," says state Rep. John Bradley, a Marion Democrat who has presided over a series of hearings aimed at determining the state's infrastructure needs. "The numbers we're hearing are just enormous. It's a really depressing situation."

The needs — and the costs — don't end with roads and bridges.

The cost to repair and upgrade existing facilities at state universities is listed at \$3 billion, according to the Illinois Board of Higher Education. That figure includes everything from new roofs to new classrooms at campuses across the state.

A survey of school districts by the Illinois State Board of Education revealed a need for \$7.6 billion to build and improve classrooms.

Because of overcrowding, school districts said they are using 370 temporary classrooms. More than 1,000 additional classrooms are needed for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. Gov. Pat Quinn's budget calls for \$1.6 billion in capital spending for schools.

A recent assessment of the condition of state buildings — including prisons, office facilities and mental health centers — found that there are an estimated \$4.3 billion in repairs that will be necessary over the next five years, says Alka Nayyar, spokeswoman for the Illinois Department of Central Management Services.

However, in the governor's proposed budget, there is just \$266 million set aside to replace or repair everything from old heating systems to the locks on the doors of prison cells.

Hancock is among those who say it's not a question of whether Illinois needs a statewide construction program, but why hasn't it happened sooner?

"That's the million dollar question. No, make that the billion dollar question," he says, laughing.

The last statewide infrastructure improvement program — known as Illinois FIRST — came about during George Ryan's era as governor, when the deal-maker from Kankakee persuaded lawmakers to raise a variety of taxes and fees to pay for a \$12 billion plan.

Most agree that widespread distrust of how former Gov. Rod Blagojevich would distribute projects in a new capital construction program kept plans for one on hold. Now, with Blagojevich out of office, the General Assembly and Quinn appear headed toward getting another job-creating program on the books. Roadwork in a state that serves as a crossroads for the nation is at the top of the list.

IDOT is responsible for approximately 17,000 miles of highway, including nearly 8,000 bridges and more than 2,100 miles of interstate highways, giving Illinois the third-largest interstate highway system in the country.

Besides having one of the largest highway systems, three of the five transconti-



nental highways — Interstates 70, 80 and 90 — as well as north-south arteries Interstates 55 and 57, pass through the state.

Hancock runs a fleet of 20 trucks and hauls cargo throughout the nation on interstate highways and state and local roads where bridge upkeep might be lacking.

On one local haul north of Fairfield in southeastern Illinois, his drivers have to detour around bridges that aren't sturdy enough for an 80,000-pound weight limit. The 20-mile detour costs him in added fuel and lost time.

"I don't recall us having to regularly do that in any of the other states we're operating in," Hancock says.

State Sen. Dale Risinger, a Peoria Republican who previously served as a top IDOT engineer, says the state will have to spend most of the money from a capital construction plan on "maintenance and catch-up" projects. That's not a new phenomenon.

"We've always had more need for maintenance than we had dollars," Risinger says.

While much of the needed work is of the mundane sort — patching, resurfacing and repairing drainage areas — there are glitzier projects on the planning books.

For years, the state has been working to build a new interstate bridge connecting Illinois with Missouri near East St. Louis.

The state also has plans for an \$82 million upgrade of Interstate 55 in Will County to help ease traffic in and out of a planned railroad and trucking hub at the old Joliet Arsenal facility.

North of Chicago, the state wants to widen Illinois 22 — known as Half Day Road — between Interstate 94 and U.S. 41 at a cost of \$23 million.

In southern Illinois, IDOT planners have identified nearly \$100 million of improvements on a heavily traveled portion of Interstate 57 between Ina and Marion.

On Interstate 80, the state has identified 15 bridges that need to be replaced on a 40-mile stretch from Henry County to near LaSalle-Peru. That cost is estimated at \$108 million.

Many other projects have been in the works for years but have remained unfunded.

For example, additional crossings over the Fox River in Kane County have been studied since the early 1990s, but no solid plans for new bridges are in the works.

Similarly, studies are ongoing to build the so-called Prairie Parkway, creating a north-south route through Chicago's westernmost suburbs in Grundy, Kendall and Kane counties.

Along with improving or expanding existing highways, Illinois faces a crisis with its bridges.

Although many of the deficient bridges are in rural, largely uncrowded areas, many structures in the Chicago area are in dire need of work.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, the busiest Illinois bridges with structural deficiencies include the Stewart Avenue elevated section of Interstate 90/94, an elevated section of the Dan

Ryan over the Chicago River, an I-55 bridge over Lemont Road in Will County, a Lake Shore Drive bridge that crosses LaSalle, and a section of the Congress Parkway bridge in downtown Chicago.

The problems with bridges aren't limited to Chicago. Alarm bells went off in the Quad Cities last summer after cracks were discovered in the Interstate 80 bridge linking Illinois with Iowa.

Inspectors discovered fissures in the steel framing under the bridge deck, sparking a scramble to get the important link repaired on the same weekend when thousands of people were pouring into the area for a running race and a major bicycle race.

IDOT officials closed the outside lanes of the 43-year-old Fred Schwengel Memorial Bridge and said the structure remained safe for passage, but the cracks were nonetheless significant to motorists after what had happened in Minneapolis the previous summer, when 13 people died after the I-35W bridge broke apart.

Public transportation also needs help.

In northeastern Illinois, the Regional Transportation Authority is one of the largest public transportation systems in the country, providing more than 578 million rides in fiscal year 2006.

With Chicago bidding for the 2016 Olympics, upgrading the century-old elevated train system has become a call to arms.

The state also has the second-largest rail transportation system in the nation, with approximately 7,900 miles of railroad.

In the Quad Cities and Rockford, local leaders look to a capital program as a way to bring Amtrak service to their communities.

While the bulk of any program will likely be maintenance projects, Risinger says political realities will play a role in getting a plan on the books. High-profile projects, for example, might go to areas where a lawmaker needs help in getting re-elected. There also are concerns that Chicago or downstate will get more projects.

Whatever political calculus is used to hammer out a plan, Risinger says lawmakers had better get moving on it.

"The need for a capital plan is there. There's no question about it." □

Kurt Erickson is Statehouse bureau chief for Lee Enterprises.

Medical marijuana

States have more discretion to enforce marijuana laws,
but Illinois may not be ready to legalize pot to treat chronic pain

by Hilary Russell

This spring marked the first time a measure to allow medical marijuana for people with chronic conditions advanced to the full Illinois Senate for debate.

Advocates also saw the chamber's new leadership as an opportunity because Senate President John Cullerton, who controls the flow of legislation in his chamber, sponsored a version of the bill two years ago. He recently said he supports the bill again this year.

Marijuana remains illegal under state and federal law. However, President Barack Obama's administration has changed enforcement guidelines to recognize individual state laws, whereas for-

mer President George W. Bush targeted marijuana distributors even if they complied with state laws.

Despite the shift in focus at the federal level, Illinois lawmakers remain leery of endorsing use of an illegal drug.

Two bills, **HB 2514** and **SB 1381**, proposed a three-year pilot program for individuals diagnosed with such chronic conditions as cancer, glaucoma, AIDS and Crohn's disease to use limited amounts of marijuana to relieve symptoms and the side effects of treatment. The program would give individuals and caregivers the opportunity to apply for a registration card, permitting the purchase and possession of seven plants and 2 ounces of dried cannabis. The Illinois Department of Public Health would oversee the pro-

gram until officials determined what constitutes a 60-day supply.

If the bills become law, opponents say that they essentially will legalize a path to drug addiction.

Thirteen other states authorize the limited use of medical marijuana for people with chronic or terminal illnesses. But the Illinois measure hasn't escaped the political gridlock that has stalled the effort for years.

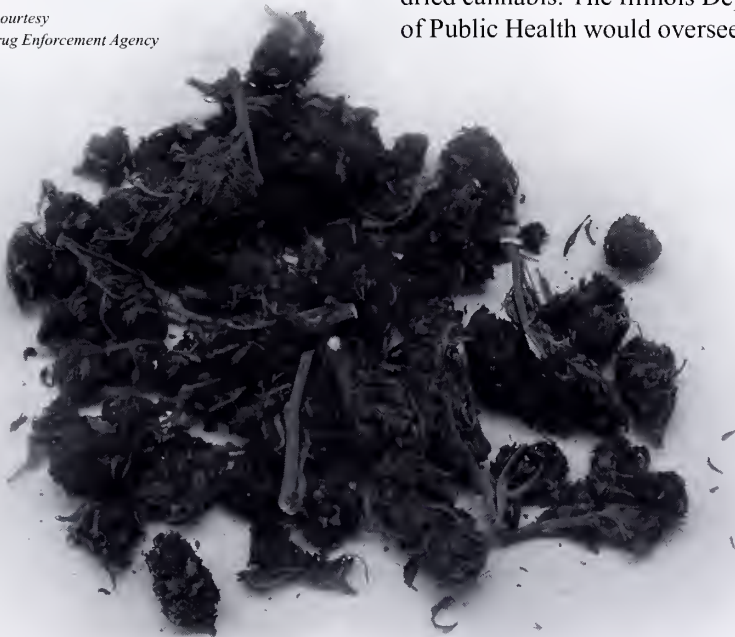
Rep. Lou Lang, a Skokie Democrat and sponsor of **HB 2514**, says a common concern is that marijuana authorization leads to legalization for everyone. One, however, is not interchangeable with the other, he says. The bills stipulate that a specific amount of the drug could be prescribed only to individuals with detailed, documented medical conditions.

"The fact is that most of the people who would be needing this are not kids," Lang says. "It's the 75-year-old lady who has colon cancer. It's the 60-year-old person with Crohn's disease or muscular dystrophy who can't move.

"I don't think we should be worried about whether it's a gateway drug," he continues. "In fact, most of those people are taking 'legal' drugs like codeine, morphine and Vicodin in huge amounts to mask their pain, and the masking of that pain is so sedating, they can't function."

Lang acknowledges that taking this kind of drug, and, in this case, inhaling one, can result in physical and mental changes. "I don't want anyone to think I buried my head in the sand about this.

*Photograph courtesy
of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency*



Clearly people that take this in sufficient doses to feel better are probably going to be a little high. But there's a little high so you can function, and there's completely high when you're sedated."

That difference extends itself into the use of prescription drugs, too, he adds. "We also don't want people driving on the streets of Illinois after taking a couple of codeine pills, either."

Sen. Pamela Althoff, a McHenry Republican, says she conducted a survey two years ago and was surprised by the results. "Overwhelmingly, I found that people don't have a problem with the use of marijuana. The issue is really one of enforcement. How does law enforcement know who has it and who doesn't? That's the problem," Althoff says.

She adds that she would oppose the Senate version of the bill, sponsored by Sen. Bill Haine, an Alton Democrat, if it comes up for a vote.

As a former state's attorney for Madison County, Haine says he designed **SB 1381** with his law enforcement background in mind.

"The bill is very strictly controlled and monitored, with penalties for not following the law," he says. "I take very seriously the concerns that law enforcement has and that unless we are strict and narrow in our crafting of the bill, it could become stealth legalization, which is what I do not want it to be."

Sen. Deanna Demuzio, a Carlinville Democrat, says she's already made her decision about the topic, and it comes down to one issue. "I have grandchildren, and it concerns me that my grandchildren would have access to it, when, in fact, all these years, it's been against the law."

Mark Henry, an Illinois State Police captain who spoke during a Public Health Committee hearing about Haine's bill, said what may offer physical relief to one person could very well act as a cash cow for another. Seven plants grown and dried, he said, equal about 3.5 pounds of marijuana, which would yield a large amount of smoking material.

"We're talking about 3,528 joints," he said during committee. "So that person would have to smoke 9.6 joints per day, every day, every year."

One pound of dried marijuana has a street value of up to \$4,000, he says. If the measures become law, it would

establish that a person would only be authorized to possess 2 ounces of dried cannabis, or about \$600 worth. That means a person who successfully grows and dries seven plants and separates out the authorized 2 ounces would still have about \$12,000 of product left over.

Most people aren't willing to throw that kind of money away, Henry said. Not in these times. "We're concerned it will end up on the street."

Ironically, medical marijuana is already legal in Illinois in the form of a pill. Marinol is composed of synthetic THC, the primary ingredient in dried marijuana. It's typically manufactured at a higher potency than the natural version. Unlike smoking marijuana, swallowing Marinol has been documented to cause a series of side effects, including dizziness, abdominal pain, confusion, depression and psychological and physiological dependence. Researchers also say the pill form takes more time to provide relief than does smoking marijuana.

"Overwhelmingly, I found that people don't have a problem with the use of marijuana. The issue is really one of enforcement. How does law enforcement know who has it and who doesn't? That's the problem."

— State Sen. Pamela Althoff

Lang says his discussions with individuals who have already tried the pill without success prompted him to push for medical authorization of the plant.

If the legislation doesn't pass this year, Lang says he will present it next session or when the time "feels right." "I am very persistent," he adds. □

Photograph by Hilary Russell



Medicinal marijuana advocates placed signs around the Capitol grounds last month.



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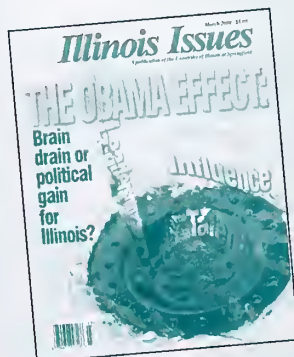
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QUINN'S CABINET

State Police director faces challenges

Gov. Pat Quinn named **Jonathon Monken**, a 29-year-old U.S. Army and combat veteran, as director of the Illinois State Police. The Chicago resident replaces longtime officer **Larry Trent**, who resigned shortly before Quinn replaced him.

Trent worked 34 years in public service, including 22 with the State Police. He was appointed director in 2003 by then-Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

Monken's appointment, however, has yet to receive the necessary confirmation by the Illinois Senate, as of press time. Some senators and law enforcement officers have expressed concerns about Monken's lack of law enforcement experience.

Quinn defends his appointee, saying he coordinated civil and military operations throughout Iraq when serving as a captain of the Multi-National Corps in Baghdad in 2005, as well as in several other leadership positions in Iraq since 2003. He also won several military awards and graduated in the top 1 percent of his class at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 2002. He was assigned as the highest-ranked recruiting officer for the Northern Illinois Officer Strength Management Team for the Illinois Army National Guard before his gubernatorial appointment.

"I'm very proud of Jon Monken and his service to our country, and I ask



Jonathon Monken

every senator to give him a fair chance to speak," Quinn said in late March. "The notion that you just preclude a decorated war veteran who led troops in combat and went on 110 missions without a single loss of life or loss of equipment, led many, many people to admire his heroism. To me, that's an ideal person for the Illinois State Police to be the director. I think most citizens agree."

Monken is a former St. Charles resident and a former mortgage banker in Chicago. He was working toward his master's in business administration from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management when he was appointed to the State Police position.

Shortly after, he had to answer questions about two aspects of department operations.

Illinois Auditor General Bill Holland's

office released a critical audit of the department's management of its Division of Forensic Services. The number of criminal cases waiting more than 30 days for DNA evidence to be analyzed increased by more than 200 percent from 2002 to 2007, and the department did not use millions of dollars in state and federal funding available to the forensic lab system, according to the report.

"The longer cases remain unanalyzed, the longer the perpetrators go unidentified, free to commit additional crime," Holland's office said.

The number of forensic scientists also declined during the same time. When the division hired private firms to help address the backlog, the audit found that the vendors did not always follow rules established in the state contracts.

Monken said in late March that the department was making adjustments during the course of the audit.

During Trent's last week in office, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan also highlighted information from news reports suggesting that the State Police failed to address thousands of court orders to expunge or seal records. Madigan's office says the backlog exceeds 6,000 in Cook County alone.

• Quinn hired **Andrew Ross** of Chicago as his deputy chief of staff. He arrived from a large public relations agency, but he's a former spokesman for the Illinois Department on Economic Opportunity under then-director **Jack Lavin**. Lavin is now Quinn's chief operating officer.



Jillayne Rock

Family history

Jillayne Rock was internally elected as the new Senate secretary. She replaces **Deborah Shipley**, who joined Gov. Pat Quinn's team as director of legislative operations.

Rock, niece of former Democratic Senate President **Phil Rock** of Oak Park, has 18 years of experience in the chamber. She previously served as chief of staff for former Senate President

Emil Jones Jr., as well as special assistant to Jones when the Democrats were the minority party. She also has experience as his deputy chief of staff and director of staff operations.

Rock returns to the chamber after briefly leaving when Senate President John Cullerton replaced Jones, who retired. Formerly of the Chicago suburb of Glenview, Rock lives in Springfield.

For updated news see the *Illinois Issues* Web site at <http://illinoisissues.uis.edu>

CAPITOL HILL

Cook commissioner replaces Emanuel

Cook County Commissioner **Mike Quigley** of Chicago replaces former U.S. Rep. **Rahm Emanuel**, who left Congress to serve as President Barack Obama's chief of staff. Quigley defeated Republican candidate **Rosanna Pulido** and Green Party candidate **Matt Reichel** in his 5th District special election April 7. In a March primary, he beat several Democrats, including state Reps. **John Fritchey** and **Sara Feigenholtz** of Chicago.

Quigley inherits a diverse and heavily Democratic Chicago district that spans from Lake Michigan to the suburbs near O'Hare International Airport. He also joins a line of past representatives, including **Dan Rostenkowski** and former Gov. **Rod Blagojevich**. "My goals for Congress are the same goals I had as county commissioner," Quigley said

after his 5th District Democratic primary victory March 3. "Transparency and reform in government is important, especially at this time. The environment has always been important to me, too, in addition to health care, education and the economy."

Quigley, who has been Cook County commissioner since 1998, began his political career in Chicago in 1983, serving as an aide to former Ald.

Bernard Hansen until 1989. In 1985, he received a master's degree in public policy from the University of Chicago, and in 1989, he earned a law degree from Loyola University in Chicago.

Bridget Gainer, who has served at the city's budget office and for the Chicago Park District, was selected to fill the rest of Quigley's term on the Cook County Board.

U.S. Senate staff

U.S. Sen. **Roland Burris** appointed **Kenneth Montoya** to serve as his legislative director and **Jose Rivera** to serve as director of his Chicago office.

Montoya, a Capitol Hill veteran since 1995, served on the legislative staffs of the late U.S. Sens. Paul Simon of Illinois and Paul Wellstone of Minnesota. Montoya also worked with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association and as the government affairs representative for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, a labor union that represents transportation- and freight-related employees.

Montoya received his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, Calif., and did his graduate work at San Francisco State University.

Rivera worked in Chicago government for the past 14 years, having served as a legislative liaison to a finance committee, and, most recently, director of program audit compliance for the Chicago Department of Human Services.

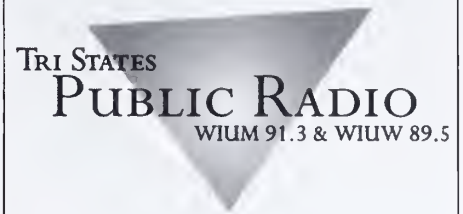
He received his bachelor's degree in political science from DePaul University in Chicago.

COURT DOCKET

Al Sanchez, former aide to Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and former city Streets and Sanitation commissioner, was convicted of four counts of mail fraud for using his public office to reward political campaign workers with jobs, promotions, overtime opportunities and pay increases.

Sanchez is the former principal organizer for a political group called the Hispanic Democratic Organization, which supports Daley's campaigns. Sanchez was convicted along with another coordinator, **Aaron Delvalle**.

The conviction is part of an ongoing federal probe into Chicago City Hall. Daley's patronage chief, **Robert Sorich**, was convicted in 2006 and received a nearly four-year prison sentence (see *Illinois Issues*, January 2007, page 35).



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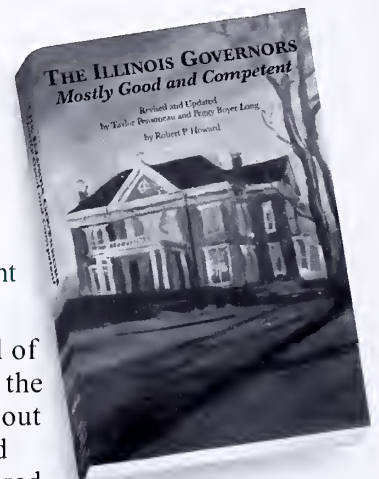
They could be
scoundrels:

- One just went to prison
- Two served time
- Three beat the rap

But they could be
visionary leaders:

- One freed his slaves
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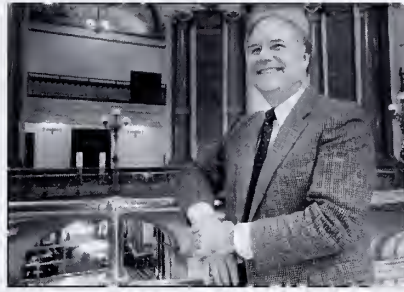
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Charles N. Wheeler III



Will 2009 be the year of sweeping ethics reform in Illinois?

by Charles N. Wheeler III

As the General Assembly gears up for a deadline dash to its scheduled May 31 adjournment, conditions certainly seem favorable for uprooting the state's long-standing culture of political corruption.

Restive citizens haven't taken up pitchforks and torches yet, but all indications are the populace wants strong action to restore integrity to public service and to put an end to Illinois' role as the laughingstock of the nation.

The impetus for change, of course, comes from general revulsion at what federal prosecutors labeled a six-year criminal enterprise otherwise known as the Blagojevich administration.

Perhaps the most jaw-dropping aspect of the 16-count indictment of the former governor unveiled last month was the assertion that Blagojevich and his cronies began to scheme even before his election in November 2002 to enrich themselves at public expense and divide the booty after he left office.

In other words, even as Blagojevich was portraying himself as the candidate of reform and renewal, an antidote to the ethically challenged George Ryan for a scandal-weary citizenry, he and his fellow conspirators were plotting to make Ryan look like a nickel-and-dime grifter. And for six years, federal prosecutors say, they did so.

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some are more doable
than others.*

No wonder reform is high on the legislative agenda.

Indeed, in a relatively rare move, the legislature's two presiding officers, Senate President John Cullerton and House Speaker Michael Madigan, are co-chairing a high-profile panel, the Joint Committee on Government Reform, to look into areas such as campaign finance reform, open government, state contracting practices and ethics training. One immediate result of the scrutiny: a new law ousting Blagojevich appointees from state pension boards and imposing stricter disclosure requirements and conflict-of-interest prohibitions on retirement system trustees and other fiduciaries.

Meanwhile, the Illinois Reform Commission named by Gov. Pat Quinn has proposed far-ranging changes, including limits on campaign contributions, enhanced campaign disclosure, an independent state purchasing entity, greater transparency in state procurement decisions and a less-partisan method of drawing legislative districts after each federal census.

All of the ideas have merit; some are more doable than others. Requiring state agencies to follow beefed-up rules in awarding contracts is a no-brainer, and posting more information online about state purchasing decisions and contract awards also seems a safe bet.

Similarly, the state's Freedom of Information and Open Meetings laws likely will be strengthened. Quinn is a longtime champion of open government, and Attorney General Lisa Madigan has made strengthening the existing acts a priority of her office.

Limiting campaign contributions is less likely, though, despite suspicions — some would say Blagojevich offers proof — that the state's unfettered system feeds corruption. Adopting federal-style limits on donors probably won't happen, given the strong legislative bias for disclosure over caps and an equally pervasive belief that funding restrictions can be circumvented easily by those intent on pay-to-play.

If those arguments prevail, reform advocates should push for intensive disclosure, including such things as more timely and comprehensive filings, full information about contributors, complete disclosure of entities behind generic-sounding PACs and authority for the State Board of Elections to audit reports, initiate complaints and punish violators. Let's really let the sunshine in.

As for allowing legislative districts to be drawn by computers — or worse, pointy-headed academics — rather than partisan cartographers, look for pigs to fly first. Settling the maps by chance may seem bizarre, but both major parties have won — and more importantly lost and survived — at the game. Republicans and Democrats alike are comfortable with the system and are hardly likely to trust their respective fates to outsiders.

A careful reader might detect the pattern here. Lawmakers are all for reforming the way the executive branch operates but a lot less enthusiastic about changing legislative practices. Self-serving? Perhaps. On the other hand, federal agents didn't tape lawmakers scheming to extort campaign contributions from hospital officials and race-track executives — or auctioning off a vacant U.S. Senate seat.

Whatever reform legislation finally emerges from the spring session — no matter how strong or far-reaching — will not be a panacea. No statute can guaran-

tee honest public service if voters put a scoundrel in office.

Consider Blagojevich's election to a second term in 2006, despite a host of warning signs that something was amiss. Reporters regularly wrote about "coincidences" in which hiring rules were bent so that contributors could get well-paying jobs, win lucrative state contracts or get plum appointments.

Auditor General William Holland routinely chastised state agencies for not following the appropriate laws or regulations in doing business, suggesting general incompetence at best, flat-out crooked practices at worst. Even U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald alluded to "endemic hiring fraud" in state employment practices in a letter to the attorney general that summer.

Yet despite the unrelenting bad news, Blagojevich won a second term, outpolling Republican candidate Judy Baar Topinka by more than 367,000 votes, with Green Party hopeful Rich Whitney a distant third. The Democratic incumbent

spent almost \$29 million, compared with less than \$11 million for Topinka, about two-thirds of it for media buys that trashed her unmercifully, virtually portraying the treasurer as George Ryan in drag. His candidacy beset by serious ethical questions, perhaps Blagojevich figured his best hope was to convince voters she was a crook, too, so vote for the one with the best hair.

Had voters paid closer attention to news reports, Holland's findings, Fitzgerald's warning and similar misgivings, and less to the incumbent's onslaught of negative TV spots, the result might have been different.

The lesson seems clear: Clean government requires an engaged, informed electorate able to discern demagoguery and unwilling to reward it. Will 2009 be the year Illinois cleans up its act? Only if future voters uphold their part of the bargain. □

Charles N. Wheeler III is director of the Public Affairs Reporting program at the University of Illinois at Springfield.



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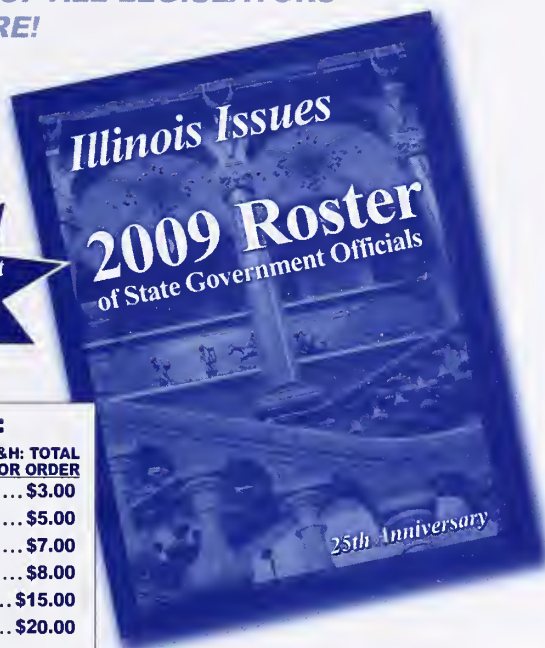
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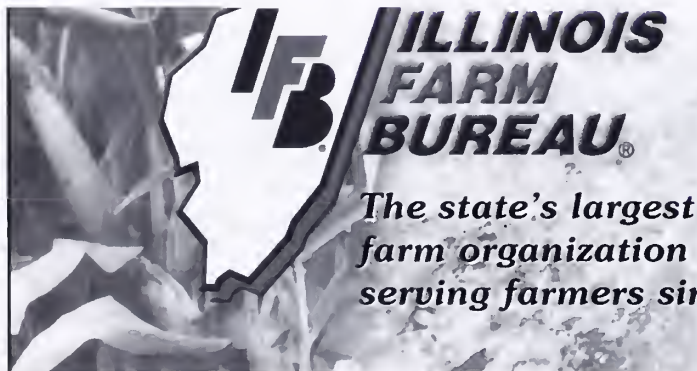
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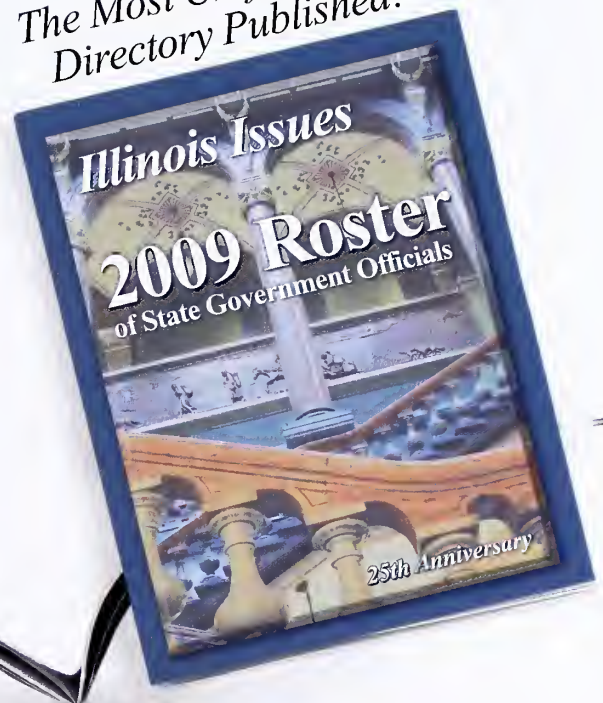
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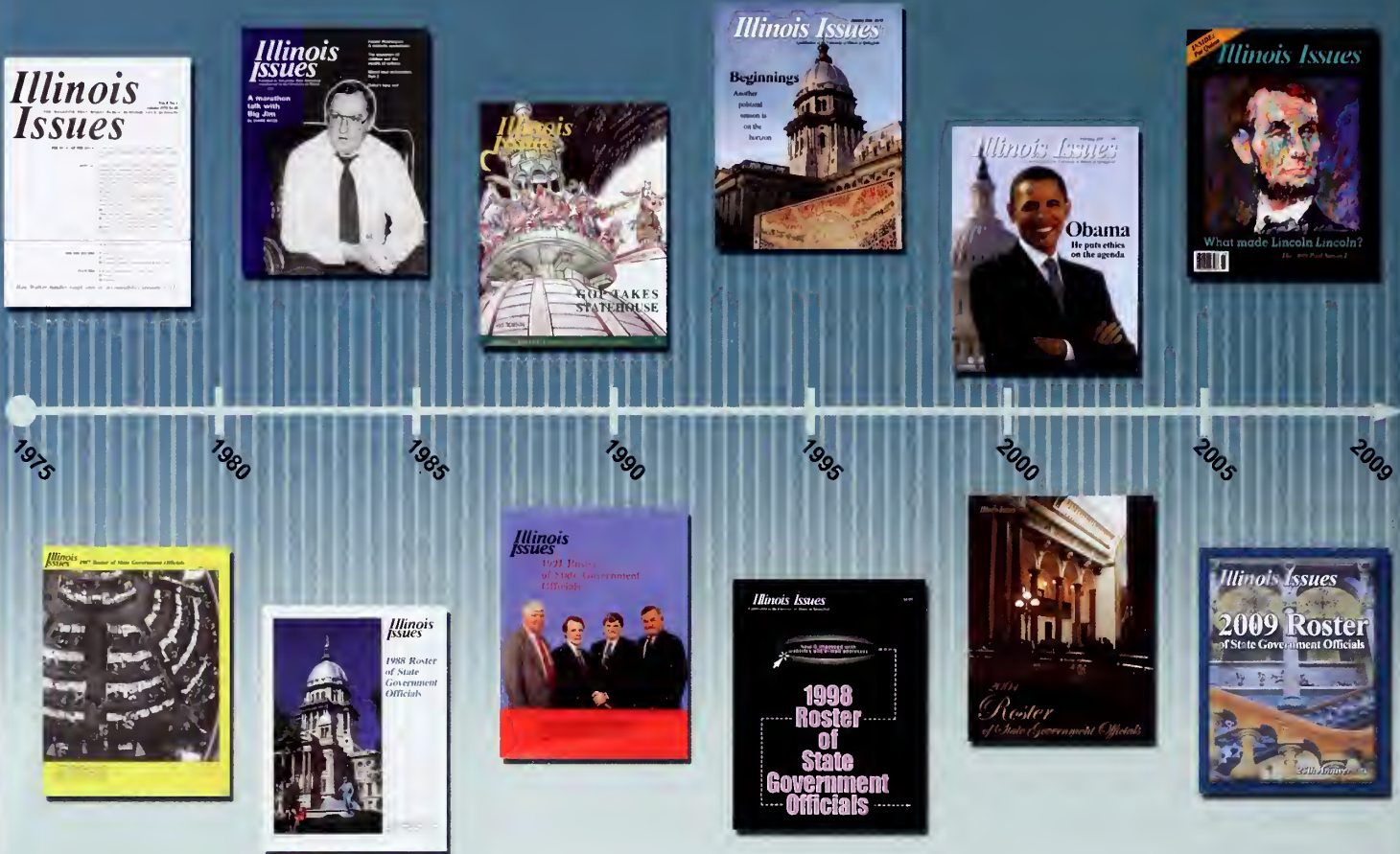
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